SHORT STORIES

No. 756.] Week ending June 27th, 1903. [Price One Penny.

NEARER AND NEARER CAME THE MOTOR-CYCLE; MORE AND MORE DEADLY BECAME THE AIM.

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(A Dramatic Incident from the Story, "A Dangerous Suitor." See inside.)

Headache

Kaputine cures the most obstinate Headache or Neuralgic Pains in ten minutes. Is the *only* preparation of its kind having the confidence and recommendation of Medical Men.

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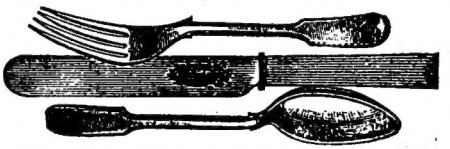

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SHORT STORIES

No. 756.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending June 27th, 1903.

A Dangerous Suitor.

A STORY OF LOVE AND JEALOUSY.

Containing the incident depicted on the cover.

A Woman and Two Men.

"CAN you tell me the way to Thurston?"

The questioner was a young man in dusty, but well-cut tweed garments, a peaked cap of leather, and high-leather leggings, and he balanced, as he stood on the edge of the wild moorland road, a much muddied, yet swift and powerful-looking motor-bicycle. The grey-bearded Yorkshire farm-hand, whom he had accosted, scanned the machine and its owner with a kind of disdain.

"Thurston!" he said, in the broad dialect of this county, "you're in Thurston." And he relapsed into his stare of silent disdain. The cyclist laughed and glanced about him at the prospect of low, dark hill-sides and sweeping, deserted road, rendered more melancholy by the cloudy warmth of the summer afternoon.

"That's all very well so far as it goes," was his tolerant answer; "but I suppose there's some sort of a village that calls itself Thurston? And then there ought to be a big rock hereabouts—at least if this is the Thurston I've been making for."

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"Humph!" the cyclist was told. "I reckon it's the Stone you want. You're not the only one that's come a fool's jaunt to see it. It's no rock—only a big pebble on the lip of a hole. I wouldn't go a dozen yards to see it."

The cyclist put a shilling into the speaker's withered palm and slapped him on the back.

"All right, Father Christmas," he said cheerfully, "every man to his taste. But you might show me how I can get to the Stone—then I can make up my mind what *I* think of it."

The old Yorkshireman chuckled with unexpected good temper and, pocketing the coin, pointed up a hilly footpath that diverged from the main road.

"Go up the brow there," he directed, "the Stone's just over it, in front of you. And I wouldn't go far on that thing of yours, for there's a nasty drop on the other side of the Stone and the path winds a bit to get by."

The cyclist nodded and sprang on to his machine, to pedal a few yards before touching a lever. The motor began to cough loudly, after its fashion, a whiff of petrol floated back on the air, and Allan Menzies, house-surgeon of St. Anne's Hospital, London, was sailing up the indicated slope as easily as if it had been down instead of up-hill.

A length or two from the crest of the hill he touched the lever once more. Another instant and the bicycle was over the rise. A low whistle broke from the young surgeon's lips, his fingers went to the brake-handle in a flash, and the heavy cycle, run deftly on to the soft moorland at the rim of the path, slowed sharply. Allan Menzies got off.

Before him was an abrupt descent in the reverse slope of the hill, a descent falling almost perpendicularly to an irregular hollow. The bottom of the hollow was eighty feet below, and held a wide, wind-ruffled pool that opened out in shallowing stretches to the lower levels of the moor.

On the lofty verge of the descent, whose height and sheerness might have entitled it to the name of a precipice, was poised a huge, flat-topped boulder, of the species known as "rocking-stones."

The young surgeon leant his machine against a bank and mounted the great slab. It oscillated beneath his weight, threatening to plunge him into the depths below. But he did not wince—he was an enthusiastic student of archæology, and he understood that the Stone was firmly fixed on its unstable base.

Centuries before, according to tradition, it had been a Druidic altar, on which human sacrifices had been offered to the God of Thunder, and as Thor's Stone it had given its name to the neighbouring village.

Allan Menzies sat down upon it and contemplated reflectively the surrounding panorama. Not far off, round the foot of the hill, he could see the roofs of the village and the tower of a tiny church. Higher up, on the flank of a commanding hill, and incircled by an ugly fenced park, was a gaunt, grey house, with tall gables.

The cyclist produced a red-backed guide-book, laid it on the Stone, and planting his elbows on either side of it, and resting his chin in his hands, leisurely perused a page.

"'Thurston-by-Ottery,'" he read, "'a small village and perpetual curacy in the parish of Ottery, known for a rocking-stone, said to have been used as a Druidic altar, and for other archæological remains. There is a picturesque little church, dating from the seventeenth century. The present holder of the curacy is the Rev. Octavius Vaughan, M.A., author

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of "The Druidical Monuments of Thurston," and other works. Ottery Hall, near here, is the seat of Mr. Cunliffe Frobisher, J.P., and a severely plain type of Yorkshire manor-house. The high-road does not pass through the village, but may be regained by turning to the left, opposite the Green Man Inn.'"

The reader checked the swift, scarcely-audible murmur in which he had been running over the various items of information. He had been interrupted by an exclamation. It came from a point below where he sat, and yet it seemed to be close to him.

"Please! Please! Mr. Frobisher!"

The voice was a woman's, and the inflection—at once pleading and protesting—was unmistakably girlish. Allan Menzies, struck by the repetition of a name he had just read, raised his eyebrows, and, drawing himself to the edge of the Stone, peered over.

Below him, moving slowly by, and apparently too absorbed to notice the motor-cycle he had propped up in full view, were a man and a woman. They had come over the hill by the same route as had Allan Menzies, and were passing the Stone on their way into the valley.

The man was big, muscular, and smartly dressed in the garb of a country gentleman, though his full black beard and heavy features lent him the air of a gamekeeper. Over his arm were looped the reins of a weight-carrying bay mare.

The woman at his side was both youthful and pretty, her figure slender yet vigorous, and her girlishly-curling brown hair set off a dainty head. She was simply dressed and wheeled a none-too-new "ladies' safety"—the firm brown fingers on the handle-bar were full of character. Her companion halted and bent upon her a gaze that, to the unseen watcher, seemed almost ferocious in its passion. Allan Menzies, fearful of embarrassing them, had hesitated to reveal his presence.

"Miss Vaughan," said the horseman huskily; "you are very cruel. Do you not understand that it is an insult to me that you should persist in riding that machine, clumsy and worn-out as it is, rather than use the one I gave you."

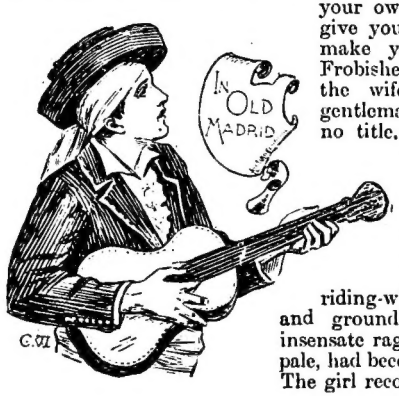
The person addressed shook her head.

"The one you offered me, Mr. Frobisher," she corrected; "I did not take it—I could not take it. You would not have it back, it is true, but I did not accept and I cannot use it. But I did not mean to insult you. And, oh, please let us talk of something else."

"Pshaw!" retorted her companion roughly, "we will talk of what I choose. I say that you insult me—me, the man who loves you better than anyone else can or will."

He silenced her by a fierce gesture, and when she would have passed on detained her by laying a hand upon the cycle she was wheeling.

"Your father's curacy," he continued, "does not provide a living for the proverbial church-mouse; I offer you, if not wealth, at least luxury and leisure. You were made to live in the sunshine—to travel, to see the world, to enjoy pictures, and music, and flowers, to wear pretty frocks, and ride in your own carriage. I can give you all these. I can make you Mrs. Cunliffe Frobisher, of Ottery Hall, the wife of an English gentleman, who, if he have no title, is the equal in descent of a dozen peers. Yet you refuse. Why? To spite me, to insult me, to thwart and trample on me."



He bent his riding-whip almost double and ground his teeth in an insensate rage. His face, from pale, had become a glowing red. The girl recoiled.

"I—I am very sorry," she faltered, "but really you are wrong. It is only because I do not love you—I do not love anybody like that. It would be wicked of me to say 'yes'—it would, indeed."

Cunliffe Frobisher started forward.

"No, it wouldn't," he cried; "you must say 'Yes.' I don't care whether you love me or not, I won't let anyone else have you. It would kill me. Elise, Elise, say you will marry me!"

Elise Vaughan sighed.

"I can't, Mr. Frobisher," she said. "I wouldn't marry any man I didn't love. I would rather die."

Her companion put out a pair of hands that quivered with passion.

"Suppose—suppose," he answered, "I gave you your choice—to die or to promise. You are killing me, Elise, what if I were to make short work of it all, and take you with me?"

Elise abandoned her machine and retreated—the expression on the countenance so close to her own was sinister in the extreme. He flung the impeding bicycle aside and advanced ominously. A cry burst from her lips.

The cry wakened Allan Menzies from his inaction. At a bound he leapt from the rock above on to the level of the path, and crossed, with an assumption of polite unconcern, to the motor-cycle that leant against the adjoining bank. Then he turned, lifting his cap to Elise.

"I—I fear I have been," he observed, "an involuntary eavesdropper on the conversation I have just interrupted. Perhaps, having regard to this gentleman's last remark, you would prefer not to—not to be left alone with him. In that case, I—I——"

He hesitated significantly. Cunliffe Frobisher uttered a terrible imprecation, but the young surgeon got out his pocket-book, and, with imperturbable self-possession, presented a strip of pasteboard to Elise.

"I am very much at your service," he continued; "as you see, though just now on a vacation, I enjoy the advantage of being that eminently respectable person, a professional man. May I offer you my escort as far as the—the village?"

Elise paused, undecided, yet attracted by his tact and friendly bearing.

"I—I am not really afraid of Mr. Frobisher," she said, "but I don't think he is quite himself at the moment. I—I will ride on."

Allan Menzies bowed, and proceeded to rescue her machine from the turfy roadside on which Cunliffe Frobisher had allowed it to fall. He delivered it to her gravely and stepped back for her to mount. She put her foot on the pedal, then glanced round at the two men. They were looking at each other in the grim English fashion that portends storm. She motioned to Allan Menzies—a girlish, half-beseeching gesture.

He understood and wheeled out his own machine. A faint, relieved smile flitted over her young features, as though she were pleased at his obedience. When she had ridden off he mounted quickly and the motor-cycle followed the shabby "ladies' safety" down the hill.

Cunliffe Frobisher remained standing. A little trickle of blood flowed over his bearded chin. He had bitten deeply into the flesh of his lower lip.

A Sudden Declaration.

"Indeed, Mr. Menzies, and I could wish that your stay in Thurston might have been extended. I assure you it is a great privilege for a hermit like myself to meet and converse with one who belongs to that outside world from which circumstances have isolated me and mine. Elise, my dear, give Mr. Menzies another cup of tea."

The Reverend Octavius Vaughan, perpetual curate of the chapelry of Thurston, was a small, spare man, in worn clerical garments, with a fresh complexion, fast whitening locks of ruffled brown hair and kindly, absent-minded blue eyes. He was lounging, as he spoke, by the open windows of a sunny country sitting-room, a half-emptied cup at his

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elbow, his spectacles between a finger and thumb, thoughtfully regarding the young house-surgeon.

Allan Menzies took his own cup to the little afternoon tea-table over which the curate's daughter was presiding. His hand touched hers as she possessed herself of the cup, but Elise did not look at him. Yet he could see, by a sensitive angle of her mouth, that her lips were quivering.

"The privilege has been mine, Mr. Vaughan," he said; "and I am loth to leave your quiet hermitage for the hurly-burly of the Big Village. Yet it must be done, my vacation ends to-day, to-morrow I must free my substitute at the hospital. But I want to carry off with me the book you so kindly promised me. Forgive my reminding you of it."

The other rubbed his thin, soft palms together.

"My dear sir," he answered delightedly. "I am honoured by your interest in the little volume. How could I forget it! Of course, of course, a copy of 'The Druidic Remains of Thurston.' Let me see, I have some copies in my study; you shall have one immediately."

"And if I may suggest your autographing it——" added his visitor.

"Certainly, certainly," said the archaeologist, flattered, and he hastened off, adjusting his spectacles as he went.

Elise Vaughan was bringing the house surgeon his second cup of tea. He turned to meet, and take it from her. Their hands touched again—this time his closed upon both her fingers and the delicate china. Elise's gaze was still averted.

"Miss Vaughan," observed Allan Menzies, gently; "do me the favour to look at me."

His request was obeyed, slowly, and he saw that the large brown eyes were full of tears. He put down the cup of tea and clasped her hand in his own strong ones.

"Miss Vaughan," he said, huskily, "I have only known you a fortnight. Dare I—ought I—will you not think that I am paying you a very doubtful compliment, or will you—will you understand——"

Elise's head had drooped; he bent a tender glance upon it.

"Some men love once and for all," he said, "I have been too busy for flirtation, too busy even to realise, in the romantic sense, that I have a heart. But when I saw you I felt, in a flash, that you were the sort of woman I could love. I have lingered in Thurston, hardly knowing what I was doing, yet hoping to cultivate, as I have been audacious enough to do, our chance acquaintanceship. You have not shunned me, thank Heaven, and in the conversation which I overheard from the Stone, you said you loved no one, really."

He broke off, she had not changed her position, or offered to speak.

"I wonder," he murmured, "if you are only sorry for me. There were tears in your eyes a moment ago. Don't pity me, Elise, tell me I must think no more of you, if you must, but don't pity me—I could not bear it; I——"

He stopped again. Elise raised her head; her eyes were still wet, but she was smiling through her tears.

"I—I was pitying myself," she faltered. Allan Menzies came so close to her that she could feel his bosom heave.

"Why?" he asked her. Elise swayed to him as a young sapling sways before a wind too strong for it.

"Because you are going away," she said. Allan Menzies uttered an inarticulate cry, and clasped her in his arms. She sprang free of them just in time, her father was re-entering the room, and with him was a tall, broad-shouldered figure in riding-dress.

"Ah, Mr. Menzies," he exclaimed, "here is the book, and here is a friend of mine whom I have been wanting to make your acquaintance, only, somehow, you have not happened to meet. But I have spoken to him of you frequently. Mr. Menzies, Mr. Frobisher—Mr. Cunliffe Frobisher, a near neighbour of ours."

Allan Menzies stepped forward, with cool self-possession. The big Yorkshireman's face was flushed and twitching, and there was a glow in his black pupils that startled the house surgeon. It was a strange, wild visage that stared into his—strong with an almost uncontrollable strength, fierce with a well-nigh ungovernable passion

The calm glance of the young medical man encountered the other's ferocious one, and his brows contracted slightly. He recognised that his rival was on the verge either of a paroxysm of insanity or an apoplectic stroke.

Was it possible, he asked himself, that the big Yorkshireman had marked the interrupted embrace, and drawn his own conclusions? He could not be sure. In any case he must do something to relieve the intolerable tension.

"I am pleased to meet Mr. Frobisher," he answered, conventionally, "but I fear it was scarcely worth while troubling him with so brief an acquaintanceship. I am on my way out of Thurston at the moment," he added, turning to Cunliffe Frobisher, "I have lingered here all too long as it is."

The other murmured some commonplace of regret, and the surgeon addressed himself to his host, to relieve the curate of the promised volume.

"Yes," he continued, with a glance at Elise, "I was to have cycled back to London, but I have stayed so long in Thurston that I must avail myself of the railway—I hope to catch the night express at Leeds."

"Sixty miles," said Cunliffe Frobisher, more politely, "a rather heavy run, is it not, in so short a time."

"Not on a motor-cycle," replied Allan Menzies, gravely, pocketing the Reverend Octavius Vaughan's masterpiece, and shaking hands with him warmly. "Sorry I must say farewell, Mr. Vaughan, in such a hurry. I shall count on seeing you again one of these days."

"I hope so," said the little archæologist, heartily; "good-bye to you, Mr. Menzies."

The surgeon bowed to the stiff, black-bearded figure behind the curate, and took his departure. On the threshold of the room he lingered to clasp Elise's hand.

"Did you see his face?" she whispered, "he was just going to burst out—I am sure he is mad."

"Who wouldn't be, over you?" answered the surgeon lightly. "But see here, I'm not going like this, my darling. I can't speak to your father yet awhile, old folks don't take kindly to love at first sight. But won't you come and say good-bye to me? I have to go back to the inn, I will be in the lane by the church as soon as it is dark. I can get to Leeds easily over these roads in three hours and a half. You will come, sweetheart?"

Elise answered with her eyes. The answer satisfied Allan Menzies, and he went off, with a louder and more formal farewell. The big Yorkshireman, ostensibly talking to the Reverend Octavius, had been covertly watching the young surgeon.

Shows What Happened.

ALLAN MENZIES had been staying for a fortnight at the Green Man, the quaint old inn in the one straggling main street of Thurston. Bound on a cycling tour as far as the Highlands he had lingered in the Yorkshire village day after day, snatching, on one pretext and another, glimpses of the girl with whom such a singular circumstance had made him acquainted.

An audacious introduction of himself to her father as an amateur student of antiquities, and an admirer of those of Thurston in particular, had served a purpose he dare scarcely own to himself.

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He had cycled with Elise, he had walked with her, he had gossiped and talked of books with her. But he had never spoken of love till the sight of those wet eyes—wetted by the thought of his departure—had surprised him into speech. He strolled back to the old inn, humming a gay air; he had never been so happy in his life.

Happiness and hunger are near cousins, and he attacked with an excellent appetite the meal he had ordered to await his return. He had made himself a favourite with the folks at the Green Man, and the landlord came and chatted with him as he sat at a table in the cool bar-parlour.

Little by little the day failed, and the dusk settled down on the Yorkshire uplands. Allan Menzies paid his bill, overhauled his cycle, lit the lamp, washed the grease and mud from his hands, and bade farewell to his host and hostess.

Springing into the saddle he pedalled off, touched a lever, and the coughing of the motor rose sharply on the night air. He sounded his horn as he swung round the bend beyond the inn.

Not far away the little spire of the ancient "chapel" showed duskily against the sky, he switched off the motor as he neared the end of the lane of which he had spoken to Elise. Turning into the lane he pedalled down it, looking for her. The high hedgerows darkened the lane, and he could not penetrate the shadows. He sounded his horn again, knowing that she would recognise the familiar *teuf teuf*.

A cry answered it—a cry in her voice. "Allan, Allan!" floated to his ears. The cry was far away down the lane, and there was terror in the girlish tones. He set over one of the small levers at his knee, and the cycle shot forward along the deeply rutted thoroughfare.

He heard the cry once more, faint and retreating, "Allan, Allan!" A superstitious thrill shook him, but he held on his course. It was dangerous steering, the ground beneath was bad, and the lane grew narrower.

Suddenly it ended. He had emerged upon the beaten path that crossed the moor towards the loftier crest and Thor's Stone. The moon was up, and by its light he caught a glimpse—or thought he did—of a horse and rider, moving in great bounds, like those of a flying thoroughbred, along the path. Nothing else broke the stillness of the rolling moorland.

Allan Menzies sounded his horn again, and again there came the cry of "Allan, Allan!" It floated back to him down the vague night breeze. He set over the gear lever of his machine, and the motor-cycle sped up the slope as only a high grade petrol-engine could have made it. It overtook the flying horse and rider, and he saw by the moonbeams a bearded face that glanced back at him. The rider was Cunliffe Frobisher, and he had something on his saddle-bow—something that struggled and screamed, in a voice that was the voice of Elise Vaughan.

The house-surgeon carried a revolver, as do many cyclists who tour much by night on lonely roads. He drew and loaded it.

"Stop!" he cried hoarsely. "Stop, you mad fool, before I have to put a bullet through you."

But the flying horsemen only laughed, and continued his desperate career. Elise, ceasing to scream, redoubled her efforts to free herself.

Nearer and nearer came the motor-cycle. Another instant, and it was alongside the galloping mare. The big Yorkshireman stared down at his pursuer with eyes of flame.

"You shan't have her!" he shouted. "You shan't! I will take her with me! You thought you had fooled me nicely, didn't you? But I heard, oh, yes, I heard, and I was waiting for my lady, here. Be still, you jade!"

He crushed Elise in his arms, and laughing wildly, urged the mare to her utmost speed. Before them loomed the crest of the hill, with the flat mass of Thor's Stone showing above it, and marking the edge of the cliff above the lake.

The slope of the hill eased somewhat, and the cycle, freed from the strain of the sharp incline, shot forward. As he came level with the galloping mare, Allan Menzies threw away his weapon, and snatched at the rein. It was the only way; he dared not risk a shot. Elise was in too close proximity to her captor. The house-surgeon had drawn up one foot, and set it on the edge of the front fork of his machine. With the speed of light, for his life depended on it, he loosed his handle-bar, and leapt high to clear his legs of the swerving cycle. It swung aside, and, hurtling into the dark of the moor, pitched over, throbbing loudly.

Allan Menzies clung to the mare's neck and hung on. The jerk at the rein had brought her round, she galloped in a new direction, dragging him with her. Cunliffe Frobisher struck at him savagely with a clenched fist, and shouted to the mare.

But the poor brute was winded and faltered in her stride. The young surgeon felt it, and swung himself up to grapple with the madman in the saddle. The other closed with him, and Elise, half fainting, slipped to the ground.

The struggle was brief. Allan Menzies was no match for his huge and maniacal opponent. He was hurled to the ground and the mare, frightened by the conflict thus suddenly terminated, plunged into the night with her rider.

Allan Menzies had fallen on soft turf, but one arm was doubled beneath him, and the shock had jarred his brains into a temporary dizziness. He recovered his scarcely-lost consciousness to feel a soft cheek against his own, and a pair of clinging arms about him. Elise, guided by the moonlight, had found her way to him, and his face was wet with her anxious tears.

* * * * *

Some farm-hands crossing the moor early the next morning, found and caught the mare. She was grazing near the edge of the pool in the hollow below Thor's Stone, her coat scarcely dry, her hoofs and legs muddy. Nor could she be easily induced to leave the spot.

A whisper of her owner's strange doings was already abroad in the village, for Allan Menzies had been carried back the preceding night to the parsonage with a fractured collar-bone, and a little party had set out from there at dawn to search the moors. The brute's attachment to its master was well-known, and her reluctance to leave the neighbourhood of the pool had in it something ominous.

Later in the day the sullen water was dragged, and the great hooks brought ashore the giant form of Cunliffe Frobisher. He had been drowned, but there were not wanting evidence of severe physical shock. Whether in his madness—for neither Elise nor her lover had any doubt that he was mad—he had ridden the mare into the pool from its lower bank, or had leapt her into it from the lofty platform of Thor's Stone, will never be ascertained.

Cunliffe Frobisher lies in the little burial ground of Thurston Chapel. His desperate wooing ended less horribly than he would have had it, but Elise and Allan, though they shudder to think of that grim struggle with the mounted madman, do not judge him.

His was a rarely passionate and ill-controlled nature, and he had been kind, in his own way, to the poor, and a just landlord to his tenants. Nor was he the first whom an ill-starred love had driven across the borderland of reason.

In all true love there is a spice of madness, let not those to whom Fate is kind judge those on whom she turns a sterner countenance. It is enough that his madness harmed none but himself. Elise and Allan are happy.

R. Norman Silver.

Ted: "Was it hard to tell Miss Prim you loved her?' Ned: "Not very. The hard part came in a month later when I had to tell her I had made a mistake."

Jane: "I shall marry no man unless he has strong temperance sentiments." Bess: "Of course not. You will want a man who isn't easily driven to drink."

Mr. Trotter: "Why did you place Foster and Bell opposite each other at dinner? Don't you know they are bitter enemies?" Mrs. Trotter: "That's just it. I did it on purpose. They spent so much time in glaring at each other that they couldn't eat much."

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The Heart of a Stripling.

Telling of How it Was Broken and Mended.

Young Thorne rang three times before a little maid in cap and apron responded.

"Mrs. Redwood is out," she told him, "and Miss Redwood, too? No, sir, I don't know where she's gone. No, sir, there was nobody with her."

Thorne considered for a moment, looked up and down the road, and made off towards the river. Fifteen minutes later, with a sigh of relief, he pulled alongside a little boat which was being idly paddled down stream. He stared straight across the boat sides, from under his down-pulled hatbrim, into the face he had come to see.

"I'm here," he announced briefly, without returning the rather constrained smile of greeting she gave him. "I told you I'd come once more. You told me not to. I did not try not to. It wouldn't have made any difference if I had. I should have come just the same. May I get into your boat?"

"I suppose it would be of no use to forbid you." She was trying to speak lightly. "You are not good at obeying."

"It would be of no use at all," he declared stoutly, as he got quickly into her boat, and tied his own to the stern. "I must see you and talk with you, and you might as well let it be here. It's the most advantageous place for you," he added bitterly, with a keen look into her downcast face. "You can keep me at arm's length without half trying. I wish you couldn't," he added under his breath.

She answered nothing, and he took her oars and pulled along swiftly for a few minutes without speaking. Presently he swung the boat round into the mouth of a little creek which wound invitingly away from the broader river, beneath arches of overhanging elms.

"Not up there," she protested.

"Only a hundred feet or so," he told her determinedly. "Just round the bend. Surely you'll let me get you a little bit away from all these other boats. You don't want everybody to see my defeat, do you? They all know my case, anyhow.

"When I go by your row of cottages I feel those women's eyes looking right through me. I know what they're saying: 'There's that fool of a Lawrence Thorne, come up here to let Julie Redwood refuse him for the third time.'"

He drew his hat further over his eyes without looking at her, and pulled rapidly round the bend. There, under the shadow of a great down-drooping elm, he dropped the oars into the boat, and catching a branch held on lightly by it, while he faced his companion.

"Now, Julie," he said softly, "look at me."

Unwillingly Miss Redwood's eyes turned upon the young fellow's face. It was a fine one, handsome, with more than ordinary well-turned features, and pale just now with fixity of purpose. A powerful pair of dark eyes looked into hers with such ardour that her own drooped beneath them.

"Just let me go over it all once more," he pleaded. "No, don't shake your head. I can't help it. I must try this last time to make you see things as I do. I suppose all I said a month ago has gone for nothing. You haven't even thought about it in the interval, have you?"

Julie Redwood raised her head and tried to smile in a frank and friendly way.

"Surely I have, Larry," she said gently, "your words are not so easily forgotten as that. But—it hasn't made any difference."

"I knew you would say that," he told her, with a long breath. "I knew you would say it the minute I gave you a chance. I'd have been a fool to expect anything else. All the same I hoped——"

He stopped for an instant, twisting the branch he held with nervous strength, then finished with a shake in his voice, "I hoped, in spite of all, Julie, that I'd made you think of me just a little more kindly."

"I couldn't think of you more kindly, Larry."

"Yes, you could," the branch snapped in his hand as he spoke. "You call it kindness to say 'no' to me because you are older than I—older!—and I have to be with you and look at you, and hear you talk about yourself as old—*you!*"

Julie Redwood flushed rosily. Her exquisite, girlish-looking beauty seemed to sustain his words. But she faced him patiently, and began to say to him what she had told him more than once before.

"Larry, dear——"

"Don't call me that. You don't mean it."

"I do mean it. I've always called you that, and loved you"—the young man stirred impatiently—"as if you were my brother—better than I could love a brother. But, Larry, think. When you were a little fellow in dresses I——"

"Used to hold me on your lap—yes, I know—and curl my hair. I've heard it all a hundred times from everybody. Great Heavens! What difference does that make?"

Thorne flung one oar into the water, plunging it savagely to the bottom and seizing it as it came up as if it were the horn of his dilemma. "Honestly, what difference? You were fifteen and I was five; you were twenty and I was ten. Then I was fifteen and you were twenty, still. I was twenty—and you—*were twenty!*"

"You do my mind and heart great honour," she said quickly. "I stood still while you went on——"

"You know well enough what I mean," he interrupted, in his turn. "You are ten years older than I in knowledge, in accomplishments, in everything but appearance. But you don't look as old as I—and you won't," he went on hurriedly. "You won't. You need never fear that by-and-bye people will begin to see the difference. Look at your mother. Only last night I heard a man wager that she wasn't over forty-five."

There was silence for several minutes while Thorne waited with an odd shortness of breath which he tried in vain to overcome. Then Miss Redwood began once more, slowly, as if she were trying to think out her argument as she talked.

"Larry, dear—please let me call you that just as I always have—I don't know how to tell you any plainer than I have already, yet I can't make you understand. It isn't only that I'm older in years, and must be forty when you are thirty, and fifty when you are——"

"Forty, and a hundred when I am ninety. That's right, rub it in!"

She sighed and hesitated for a moment, looking down into the water, while her fingers absently pulled a water-lily bud into pieces. "It's more than that. You know how much I care for you——"

"Oh, yes, I know," muttered Thorne beneath his breath.

"I shall always care just as much. You are the dearest boy——"

"Oh, Julie!" cried the young fellow desperately, "spare me that, I used to like it, when I was a boy. I'm not a boy now, if I am only twenty-three. I used to be happy when you called me that and think it meant something. I know now it means about as much as a pat on a dog's head—to keep him quiet. It won't keep me quiet any longer. I'm not your 'dearest boy.' I don't want to be. I want to be your——"

"Larry!" she stopped him with a heightened colour in her cheeks, as his eager voice reached the dangerous word, so sweet to him, so unwelcome to her. "You mustn't say it. You can't be that. I've told you so over and over again.

"I try to make you realise that with all my love for you I

can't love you—*so*. You make me have to put it very plainly; and I hate to hurt you, but I must. It isn't so much that I'm too old for you—it's that you are not old enough for me.

"It isn't your fault. Ten years from now you will begin to be old enough to marry a woman of thirty-three; but now—dear—can't you see? You are just a boy, and that—isn't *enough* for me."

The words had grown softer and slower and more gentle with each sentence; but Julie Redwood saw with an aching heart that each one had dealt a cruel blow.

Thorne winced beneath them like a lad under a lash; and as they ended, he suddenly seized the oars, flung them into the locks, and began pulling as if for dear life.

With his head bending and falling before her as he rowed, his mouth with its handsome curves compressed into one narrow, straight line, his unhappy eyes fastened upon the bottom of the boat, Thorne was trying to take his sentence like the man she had said he was not.

At last Miss Redwood broke the silence, beginning tenderly, "Dear, you will get over it——"

"Don't!" cried Thorne, so wildly that she stopped, frightened, and hardly dared to look at her young lover, rowing with a short, quick stroke which sent the two slender boats through the water like one long arrow.

She waited then, her heart beating fast, for she was really very sorry for the young fellow, whose boyish adoration had grown into this great and unmanageable passion.

For one pitying moment it seemed as if such love—immature as it appeared to her—might satisfy her from its very intensity, even though it lacked the qualities she longed for. But when Thorne spoke at last, the very words which deepened her pity for him hardened her heart against his suit, they were so characteristically boyish.

"I've tried all my life to please you," he pleaded, looking up into her face with eyes which made her own fill. "From a little lad I've thrown over my own will whenever you asked it.

"I learnt to play the violin—when I hated the bother—because you wanted me to. I went to college instead of into the warehouse with father because it was your wish.

"I kept straight all through, where lots of other fellows went to the devil, because you said you couldn't kiss any but clean lips. God knows what I've forsworn for the sake of those two kisses a year—one when I came home for holidays, and one when I went back."

His voice broke; with a hasty movement he drew one white flannel sleeve across his eyes. After a minute he went on a little shakily—

"You think me boyish, yet since eighteen I've had but one hope and one ambition—to get old enough and wise enough and worthy enough to win you. I've had little affairs with girls, of course—what fellow doesn't? But never for one moment has my ideal changed. Is that boyish? Five years of trying to grow fit for one woman?

"And now I've got myself ready for the work you wanted me to do, and have a good start and an independent income, to say nothing of father's promises. I thought when I reached that you would be pleased and proud enough to reward me. It's all I've lived for. And now you say I'm only a boy. What makes a man, Julie—only years?"

He was looking at her so despairingly that she felt it hopeless to try to comfort him. Yet she made one more attempt.

"Larry," she said, giving him one long look out of the beautiful eyes which were so dear to him, "I can only tell you that if you are still a boy, you are a very manly one, and I'm proud of you. I wish with all my heart I could give you what you want, even though I know it isn't best."

"You wish you could," he cried, wresting from her words one more vain hope which she had not meant to convey; "then *do* it, Julie—*darling!*—Listen——"

Regardless of possible onlookers, he dropped into the bottom of the boat, and grasping the hem of her gown pressed his lips to it, while he looked up into her face with eyes as beautiful in their pleading as her own—"Love you?—*oh!*"

It was almost a groan, and it hurt her tender heart as she realised how the boy longed for her. She had to turn her head away and steel herself to answer in a whisper, as she tried to draw him to his feet:

"I know you do, dear, and it's very sweet to me. You mustn't think I don't appreciate all you have done to please me. I do, and love you dearly for it. Nobody will ever be to me what you have been—in one way. But, Larry—I can't change my answer, and you must not ask me to again."

* * * * *

During the following years of travel with an invalid mother, Miss Redwood heard nothing from her old friend, Lawrence Thorne.

The morning after her arrival at their country home, the second year after Larry had left her with a gloomy last "Good-bye," she was early upon the river.

For some reason she found herself rowing towards the little creek, and as she did so, she caught sight of a boat slowly approaching her in the narrow opening. A pretty girl sat in the stern, and the athletic figure of a young man occupied the middle of the boat.

Something about the outlines of this figure struck Miss Redwood as strangely familiar, and as she looked more intently at it the young man glanced over his shoulder and their eyes met.

Julie Redwood gazed into a handsome, laughing, flushing face, with a light in the eyes so different from the melancholy expression she had so long remembered, that her first thought was one of reproach at his fickleness. But the next was a sense of relief that Larry was happy again, and a very genuine pleasure at sight of him.

Twenty minutes later Lawrence Thorne's boat, bearing only himself, raced up the waters of the creek, and touched sides with Julie Redwood's trim craft. She smiled into his joyful, anxious eyes.

"You're glad of it, Julie?" he asked breathlessly. "You wanted me to be happy?"

"Indeed I did, Larry."

"That's like you. Well, I am happy—happier than I thought I ever could be—that day—you know when. It took me a year to even begin to get over that. But I had to love *her*. She's like you in ever so many ways—she is, really; don't laugh. She is the sweetest—I am the luckiest——" He broke off, laughing shamefacedly.

"I'm so glad, Larry, dear; I can't half tell you," she began heartily, when the distant splash of oars made them both look up. Another boat was coming rapidly towards them, propelled by a solitary figure. As Miss Redwood recognised this gentleman, she blushed charmingly in her turn.

"Larry," she explained hastily, "this is—a—friend of mine who is coming. I'm glad to have you meet him. I must tell you—he is——"

"I see," whispered Thorne, laughing whole-heartedly under his breath. "Your face gives you away, Julie. Well, I'm glad—now. But tell me, dear—is he *old enough* to marry you—surely?"

"Yes," she whispered gaily back, rejoicing with her whole soul that the cure was so complete. "He's eleven years my senior!"

Then she waved her handkerchief, and Larry watched a fine-looking fellow whom he would have thought not over forty row up to them and greet his *fiancée* with a look of happy confidence. And so she introduced her friend to her lover, and the two men shook hands cordially across the boats.

Grace S. Richmond.

BROWN (of the firm of Brown and Jones): "Why did you countermand your order for those fountain pens?" Jones "The agent took down my order with a lead pencil."

"THE first step towards wealth," says an author, "is the choice of a wife." "And the first step to securing a good wife is the possession of great wealth," says another. Here we have one of those good rules which work prettily both ways

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Letter Juggling Competition.

CASH DOWN. FIRST PRIZE, £25.	CASH DOWN. SECOND PRIZE, £10.	CASH DOWN. THIRD PRIZE, £5.

TWO BILLIARD TABLES *(measuring 4 ft. 10 inches by 2 ft. 8½ inches), together with cues, balls, marking board, and spirit level,*
And **TWENTY-FIVE GRAMOPHONES**, *each one fitted with a Concert Sound-Box, and accompanied by two records.*

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WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below you will find twelve sets of letters, each of which contains the name of a Railway Station in the United Kingdom (not necessarily using all the letters). You must write (in ink), in the space left for that purpose, the longest name you can make by rearranging the letters.

The name containing the greatest number of letters will be the correct solution. If, however, more than one such name can be made out of one set of letters, each will be counted correct.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January (1903) edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to BRADSHAW'S GUIDE, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or ROOM EIGHT, "SHORT STORIES," 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The first prize of £25 will be given to the competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £10 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, take out this page and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in "SHORT STORIES."

In the event of a tie a further set (or, if necessary, several further sets) of letters will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

EXAMPLE:
ABGHIIMMNR... Birmingham.

FOURTH LIST.

37. AEFGHN	**43. AABHORRT** .....
38. BILORST	**44. ADEEFIKLOW** .....
39. AAEGMRT	**45. AEFGGLNR** .....
40. CDNWYY	**46. CDHIMNOR** .....
41. AHMNOOPSTTU	**47. ABELNO** .....
42. EENNOQSTUW	**48. ADEIKLR** .....

Name..... Address.....

.....

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STERN DUTY.

Which Tells How a Woman's Love Foiled a Man's Pride.

BERYL CLYVE hastily ran down the steps of Taunton Lodge, then, as she reached the bottom, she turned to wave a laughing adieu to an elderly man who was watching her from the hall door.

"Good-bye, pater, dear," and she daintily kissed the tips of her fingers to him as she lightly stepped into the dogcart and gathered the reins in her hands with the skill of an experienced driver.

If there be any truth at all in elfin lore, then surely all the good fairies must have been present at Beryl's birth and given her simultaneously all good gifts, of which they generally only grudgingly bestow one or two on each child as it comes into the world; for she had grace and beauty, wit and cleverness, besides being liberally endowed by fortune.

Being the only daughter and heiress of the fabulously wealthy Mr. Clyve, whose immense warehouses were the busiest and largest in London, Beryl found herself the centre of an adoring crowd of suitors, but she persistently kept them at bay with her oft-repeated:

"Oh, I do not want to get married for another ten years, if I ever do make up my mind to desert my darling old pater, who spoils me so."

The only cloud in her bright young life had been the absence of a mother's love and care, and even then it is doubtful whether she ever fully realised the void, as she could not remember the delicate, frail young mother who had never lived to have the joy of bending over her baby's cradle.

When he lost his wife, whom he had passionately loved, Mr. Clyve centred all his hopes on his idolised daughter.

Past the carriage drive and between the massive pillars of the gateway the dogcart sped on its way to London, down the Richmond High Street, and on towards the busy thoroughfares of the Metropolis.

Beryl drove at the rather excessive speed which she was wont to drive even in the very heart of London; she was such a good hand at driving that it made her rather reckless. The groom leant respectfully forward and ventured to remonstrate.

"Be careful, miss, this is a nasty bit."

But Beryl turned back smiling.

"Don't be nervous about me, Burrows, I know what I am about."

Hardly were the words out of her mouth when a huge van, driving at furious speed from a side street, came full tilt right into the dog-cart.

The shock literally made Burrows fly from his seat to the ground, where he lay stunned by the violence of the fall; the reins were jerked out of Beryl's hands, and fell across the affrighted horse's neck; he snorted, reared his head aloft, and then, quick as lightning, bolted down the street at such a mad speed that the unfortunate Beryl was absolutely helpless to try even to check him.

Naturally a brave, high-spirited girl, Beryl did not lose her presence of mind; she resolutely held on to her seat. Once she tried to bend down over the horse's back and catch hold of the fallen reins, but this she soon found was impossible, and she felt she would only be thrown right over the horse and trampled under his hoofs.

It was an appalling sight to see this snorting, infuriated animal careering down the street, flying onwards to a terrible doom, while this beautiful girl, with hat blown off and her golden hair rippling over her shoulders, sat with strained, distorted eyes and clenched hands while a thousand thoughts sped through her brain.

It is a well-known fact that the speed of thought is quicker than any known mortal thing. Her whole life seemed to print itself so clearly on her brain; she felt an infinite pity for herself, as if she were embodied in another person and no longer Beryl Clyve.

"So young to die, without any preparation or warning! And her pater, oh, her poor darling pater, it would surely break his heart!" And though she had shed no tears for herself at the thought of him, a great dry sob escaped from her parched throat, and then in the intense agony of approaching death, she uttered one long agonised wail:

"Stop him, oh, stop him, for Heaven's sake!"

Alas! her appeal remained unanswered. In front of them everyone cleared the way, no policeman was at hand, and no brave man was to be found in that motley crowd of faint hearts to rush to the horse's head, and so attempt to save the life of the hapless girl who sped on at lightning speed to her awful doom.

By some extraordinary miracle the foaming animal did not collide with any other vehicle, but suddenly it dashed itself with fearful force against a lamp-post. A thundering crash was heard, the horse, panting and bleeding, stood still at last.

As for the unfortunate Beryl, she had been thrown out of her seat, and she fell heavily on the edge of the kerbstone; a slight moan escaped her, and then she lay perfectly motionless, apparently lifeless.

She was soon surrounded by a gaping throng; a young man pushed his way through the crowd, who made way for him, when he peremptorily announced:

"I am a doctor, let me pass."

He knelt beside the fallen girl and gently raised her head.

"She is seriously injured; make room all of you, let her have air," and he waved them back, while he raised the wounded girl in his arms.

Carrying the still unconscious Beryl, he walked deliberately into the opposite house, and into his consulting-room, resolutely shutting his door in the face of the crowd and police.

Very carefully he laid her on a couch and proceeded to examine the extent of her injuries. She had fallen with her face on the kerbstone, and was terribly cut and mangled about the eyes, nose, and mouth, a deep gash gaped right across her forehead.

Poor Beryl! No one would have recognised the beautiful, smiling girl who had left her home an hour ago; she was disfigured past all recognition; her lovely soft, silky hair hung around her tangled and soaked with the blood which flowed from her wounds.

"Poor child!" muttered Meredith Carruthers, as he gently

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washed away the blood and dust with antiseptics; "she is evidently quite young, and I think she must have been pretty, but now—I must try to save her from being disfigured at all costs. What a cruel blow it would be to a fair young girl if she were to have her looks spoilt for ever."

As he tended her he could not help putting her to a certain amount of pain, and this very consciousness of suffering made her heave a deep sigh, and her eyelids flickered.

Gently Meredith Carruthers passed his arm round her and raised her head. She opened her eyes, and as her gaze met his an exclamation of wonder escaped her.

"What has happened? Where am I? And——"

She stopped as a hot flush suffused her brow and cheeks when she noticed his arm supporting her, and she tried to raise herself and move further away on the couch, but the intense agony of the movement made her involuntarily cry out, and, helpless, she fell back with her head on his shoulder and her eyes closed once more.

He bent over her, and with a voice of infinite tenderness and soothing whispered:

"Don't be frightened, you have had an accident, and have been hurt, but I am a doctor. You fell at my very door. It must have been Providence which brought you under my surgery window, so that at least you can have medical attendance at once.

Beryl fell heavily on the edge of the kerbstone, and lay there perfectly motionless.

"Surely you are not afraid of me? My name is Meredith Carruthers. As soon as I have seen to your injuries I shall let your friends know of your accident, and they will come to fetch you."

Patients of Doctor Carruthers often said that they felt better directly they heard his voice, there seemed to be such a calming power in those tones, so gentle and yet so full of authority, as if sickness and pain must give way before him.

Beryl seemed to feel that strange sort of fascinating sway Meredith Carruthers exercised over all those with whom he came into contact. As she slowly reopened her eyes she let them rest trustingly on his, and with infinite tact he slipped the arm away which was supporting her, and putting an extra pillow at her back, continued to see to her injuries.

"Am I hurting you very much?"

"No, Dr. Carruthers, you are very good to me," she murmured.

"Nay, I wish I had been in time to save you. Will you stop here quietly while I tell my man to get you a cup of tea? I think you would like one, would you not?"

"Oh, yes, the very thing."

"Don't move till I come back. I shall only be a minute away."

What woman ever obeys orders! Beryl was no exception to this rule. Hardly had the young doctor left the room when she threw off the rug, and, struggling to her feet, in spite of the intense pain and of a sick feeling of faintness, she moved by leaning on various pieces of furniture, and placed herself in front of the mirror over the mantelpiece.

When she beheld the ghastly sight reflected there, her eyes bruised and bloodshot, her lip cut open with a nasty wound, her nose painfully swollen, and a horrible crimson gash right across her brow, no one would ever have recognised in this pitiful plight the lovely Beryl Clyve, the beauty of so many London drawing-rooms!

Beryl was not vainer than any of her sex, but she was only a woman after all, and what woman would have remained indifferent to the absolute destruction of her looks? With a piteous cry she swayed forward, and would have fallen to the ground if Meredith Carruthers, who had just re-entered the room, had not caught her in his arms, and carried her back to the couch, where he laid her.

"Now, this will never do; you must obey the doctor's injunctions." He spoke in an authoritative voice. "You are a most undisciplined patient!"

"Please forgive me, Dr. Carruthers. Don't scold me, I am afraid I repay your kindness very inadequately."

She put up her two hands over her face, as if ashamed of her weakness, or perhaps to hide her appalling ugliness even from his sight.

"Will I remain thus? Am I disfigured for ever?"

Meredith Carruthers was possessed of a very tender, sympathetic heart; he had often been heard to say that he never operated on a child without feeling intense pain at having to inflict suffering on this little unconscious being, who could not understand what was really for its good.

Beryl's distress now keenly appealed to him.

"Poor child, do not fret; you will look bad for weeks, nay, perhaps for two or even three months; but the injuries are not deep, the skin will heal and grow again, and you will not be disfigured."

In spite of this emphatic assurance she remained with her face buried in her hands, and did not move except to murmur.

"Oh, yes; I suppose you are just saying this to comfort me: Just a sort of doctor's promise!"

He bent over her, and taking her two little hands in his, drew them down from her face.

"No, I never make what you call *doctor's promises*. When I cannot tell the truth to a patient I say nothing. Won't you trust and believe me when I tell you that you will certainly not be disfigured if you follow my instructions implicitly?"

She glanced up, and looked straight into his honest, loya

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eyes, and all her doubts fled; it seemed so impossible not to put faith in his word.

"Yes, I believe you, Dr. Carruthers."

"When your people remove you from here they will, no doubt, put you into the hands of your own family physician, and you will naturally follow his prescriptions; but you must never omit to use this ointment which I shall give you; rub it on your face morning and evening for two months, till all the scars disappear. If you do this, I promise you no trace of your injuries will remain. Now you must take some tea," and he rose from her side as his manservant entered with the tray.

Meredith returned to the side of the couch holding a cup of tea in his hand.

"Oh, I can't possibly swallow it, my mouth feels so painful with this horrible gash on my lip."

"You must try," he said gently but firmly. "Come, I shall help you," and, filling the spoon, he held it to her lips.

As she swallowed the tea she winced with pain, but she bravely tried to please him by doing his bidding. The second spoonful did not hurt quite so much, and as carefully as he would have fed a child he applied spoonful after spoonful to her lips.

"Oh, how refreshing!" she said at last. "And how good you are to me. How can I ever repay all your great kindness? You do not even know my name or anything about me!"

"Well, it was more urgent to sew up your lip and bind up your wounds, was it not, than to put you through your catechism?"

"My name is Beryl Clyve. You must have heard about my father, Richard Clyve, the big City man?"

"Yes, everyone knows Richard Clyve by reputation at least. So you are his daughter? Well, our paths in life lie apart; I do not expect that you and I will ever meet again after to-day."

"Oh, please do not say that, we must always be friends; how can I ever forget all you have done for me to-day?"

"You will easily forget in the busy vortex of fashionable life."

"Never!" she said emphatically.

"Well, we shall see," and he smiled incredulously. "I shall never seek you out to remind you of your promise!"

"Well, then, I shall have to seek you," and a wintry smile passed over her poor distorted features.

"Now I must send my man to your father's office to tell him of your accident."

He was still busy applying lotions when the door burst open and Mr. Clyve rushed into the room.

"Beryl, my child! Oh, good gracious, what *has* happened to you?"

The agonised father was absolutely horrified to see her in such a state. Could this disfigured girl be his beautiful Beryl?

"Pater, dearest, don't worry about me," she murmured softly. "I shall soon be all right, thanks to this gentleman. Let me introduce you to Dr. Carruthers, who has acted the part of the good Samaritan to me. He says your little Beryl is not going to remain the hideous monster she is at present!"

Mr. Clyve turned at once to the doctor and warmly grasped his hand, exclaiming—

"God bless you, sir, for your kindness to my child!"

"I only did my duty." The young man bowed and retired discreetly to the window.

"Beryl, my darling," said Mr. Clyve, "I must have you moved from here at once. We must get the opinion of a really good physician. I do not expect this young fellow knows much."

"Oh, hush, hush, pater; if he were to hear you he would feel so hurt, and he has been so good to me."

"Well, but child, he may be very good, but that does not make him a clever doctor."

"He *is* clever," she asserted, "and I would rather trust to his diagnosis of my case, than to that of the greatest of London physicians."

"We shall see about that. Now I must attend to your being taken home."

He turned to Meredith Carruthers.

"There is, I suppose, no danger in moving my daughter at once to her own home?"

"No, not if she is borne from here lying full length in a carriage."

"I shall at once order one round, and also telephone for a couple of trained nurses to accompany her."

Mr. Clyve bustled out of the room; Meredith left the window and drew near the couch.

"Thank you, Miss Clyve, for so warmly advocating my humble skill, and especially for trusting me."

"Oh, Dr. Carruthers, you heard what my father said?" she exclaimed, horrified.

"I do not blame your father, it is his great love for you which makes him so anxious, and I do not wonder. But I shall never forget that *you* believed in me."

Shortly afterwards Mr. Clyve returned. A carriage with soft springs, a couple of nurses, everything which money can procure in London at a moment's notice, had been secured by Mr. Clyve. The nurses carefully lifted Beryl from the couch and bore her to the carriage. When she was comfortably settled, Meredith drew near to bid her farewell.

"Good-bye, Miss Clyve; don't forget about the ointment, I have given some to one of your nurses."

"Good-bye, Dr. Carruthers, we shall meet again soon, I shall want to renew my ever grateful thanks to you."

Mr. Clyve again shook hands with the young man, hastily repeated his thanks, and took his seat by his daughter's side.

When the carriage slowly moved on, Meredith returned to his surgery, and a half sigh escaped him.

"Fool that I am, I shall never see the girl again, and——" He stopped short, and a deep frown gathered on his brow as he caught sight of a ten pound note lying on his table.

"Confound it! I won't accept such a fee. I shall return it by post to Mr. Clyve."

Just then he espied on the floor a tiny rosebud and a sprig of maidenhair fern, which Beryl had worn tucked into the bosom of her dress. On the white rose lay one ominous red spot.

"There can be no harm in my keeping this," and he pressed the soiled flowers to his lips. He next addressed an envelope to Mr. Clyve, in which he inclosed the ten pound note. Then he hurried off to the hospital, and tried to dismiss from his mind all thoughts of Beryl Clyve; this was indeed a difficult task he had set himself to perform.

Days, weeks, and months slipped by, and Meredith Carruthers grew weary of waiting for tidings of Beryl. Her father had never acknowledged his note. He had been deeply hurt that Mr. Clyve had not asked him to look in and watch the progress of his daughter's case, and he was too proud to call at Taunton Lodge and inquire about Miss Clyve.

"Nay," he remonstrated with himself, "'tis best so. She and I move in different spheres of life, and 'tis better she should pass entirely out of mine."

Meredith Carruthers set himself to work with renewed energy; he thought, and rightly enough, that intellectual labour is the only panacea for all the troubles with which our frail human lives are assailed. Three months after the carriage accident Dr. Carruthers was busy in his study when James looked in.

"Please, sir, a lady to see you."

"All right, show her in."

A lovely girl entered the room richly clad in the costliest of costumes; an evidently expensive hat shaded the purest and fairest of faces, just then suffused in rosy tints.

She paused on the threshold, then, quickly crossing the room, she moved up to the young doctor with her hand outstretched. He gazed at her in such evident surprise that she stopped irresolute, and a pained expression overspread her features.

"Oh, Dr. Carruthers, you do not remember me!" she exclaimed reproachfully.

The silver tones of her voice were engraven on his heart, he recognised them at once.

"Oh, Miss Clyve, forgive me, your voice I knew at once, but your face——"

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She laughed.

"Well, yes, I suppose you could not be expected to recognise my face. I was such a pitiful object the day you picked me up from the gutter, whereas now I am, thanks to you and your directions, fairly presentable. I might pass in a crowd—don't you think so?"

And she looked at him with the sweetest and most girlish coquetry. She knew she was beautiful, and she wished this one particular man to bow before her sovereignty of beauty. Little cared she what tribute the whole world paid her if Meredith Carruthers did not think her lovely.

Enraptured he gazed at this vision of pure, womanly loveliness, which seemed by its presence to shed a halo of glorious light in his dingy study.

She gracefully dropped into a chair and loosened her wraps as if she meant to make herself quite at home.

"Tell me now, Dr. Carruthers, did you not think me an ungrateful wretch all these long months, that I never gave you sign of life?"

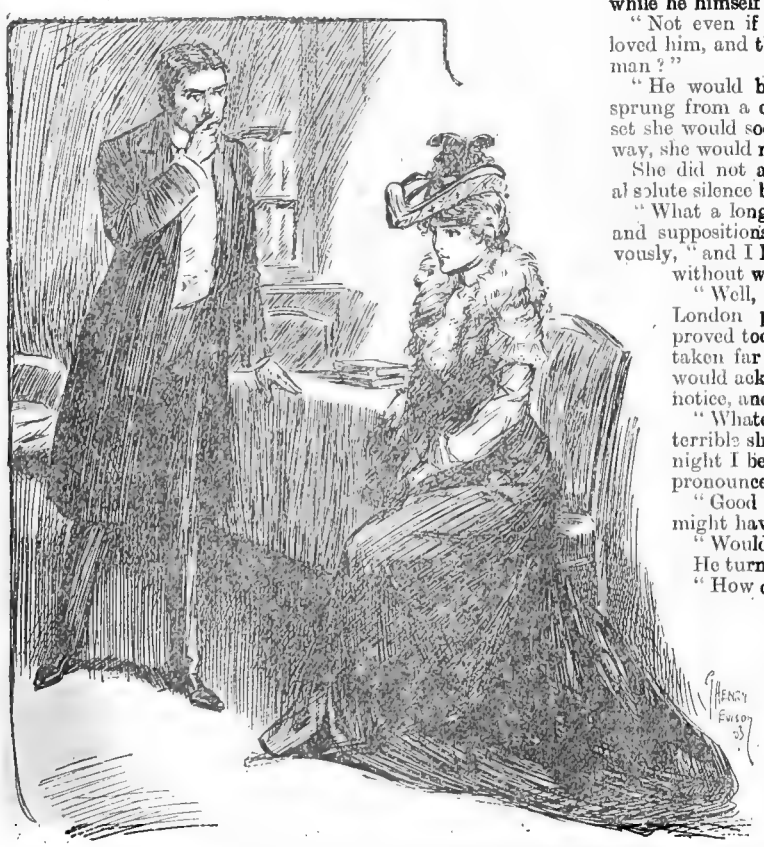
"I had no right to expect anything else, Miss Clyve."

"Oh, but you know, I promised to come back and thank you!"

He did not answer, he was too proud to acknowledge how often he had thought of this promise of hers.

"Then you did not wonder why I never came, why I never wrote to you? If I had not come now you would not have cared! In fact, from the day I left your house you never cast another thought on me?" She spoke in low, rapid tones, but there was an angry quaver in her voice.

It was the first time that any man had appeared so absolutely indifferent to the beautiful, wayward, spoilt child of fortune.



"Suppose this damsel in distress had lost her heart to the knight, what then?"

"No, Miss Clyve, you are wrong. I thought of you again and again, but our stations in life are so different that I felt it was best that we should not meet again."

"Why?" she asked.

He smiled somewhat sadly.

"Did it not strike you, Miss Clyve, that *even* a doctor has a human heart, and—but this, of course, is only a ridiculous supposition—that a doctor might lose the heart he is generally not supposed to possess at all to a beautiful damsel in distress, whom a casual chance had allowed him to succour. Of course, I repeat, this is only a mad, impossible supposition."

She lowered her eyes, and began toying with the end of her sable boa.

"Suppose this damsel in distress"—she spoke very low, and never raised her eyes to his—"had lost *her* heart to the knight who had been so noble, chivalrous, and good to her, that during the many weary days and nights when she could not come to him her thoughts had dwelt ever on him, what then?"

He grew pale to the lips, a great longing seized him to take this lovely girl in his arms, and tell her how passionately he loved her, how he had yearned for her return, but he controlled his feelings, and in a cold, hard voice, replied:

"Supposing such an impossible thing had happened, it would be the stern duty of this young man to inform the rich young heiress that she had allowed her romantic feelings and an exaggerated sense of gratitude for a very small act of kindness shown her to blind her to the true state of things, and to imagine herself in love with a person totally unsuited to her.

"The difference of fortune between them would be an insuperable barrier never to be got over. No self-respecting man would ever consent to wed a woman rolling in gold, while he himself had nothing."

"Not even if he loved that woman, and if he knew she loved him, and that she never could be happy with any other man?"

"He would bid her forget her romantic fancy for him, sprung from a certain chain of circumstances. In her own set she would soon meet a man more suitable to her in every way, she would marry him—and forget the other."

She did not answer, and there followed a few minutes of absolute silence between them, then she looked up.

"What a long way our digression on 'might have beens' and suppositions has led us," and she laughed rather nervously, "and I have not yet told you why I remained so long without writing or coming to thank you.

"Well, when pater got me home he had tip-top London physicians down to see me; I expect they proved too much for me altogether! *You* would have taken far better care of me." She paused to see if he would acknowledge the subtle flattery, but he took no notice, and she proceeded:

"Whatever the real cause (they said it was the terrible shock I had experienced), but that very same night I became delirious, and the next morning I was pronounced to have brain fever."

"Good Heavens! and I knew nothing of this—you might have died!"

"Would you have been sorry?" she asked gently.

He turned his face abruptly away from her.

"How can you ask such a thing?"

"I do not know; I thought perhaps you might be like the young man of our recent suppositions, and that stern duty might veto your being even sorry for the luckless heiress!

"Well, to make a long story short, for nearly three weeks I lay between life and death; mercifully one of my nurses to whom you had given instructions about the ointment applied it morning and evening, and so my beauty was not quite spoilt! Was it, now?" and she turned her glorious azure eyes full on him.

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He could not help laughing.

"Poor Miss Clyve, if you are fishing for compliments, I warn you, you are fishing in muddy waters—I do not know how to pay compliments like the gay Society men to whom you are accustomed!"

"Well, Dr. Carruthers, you are mean; but never mind, I must proceed with my story. When I was at last pronounced to be out of danger, the doctor declared a change of air to be absolutely imperative. Then we went to France and Italy. I had never seen Rome, and after a time I begged of pater that we should go there.

"Hardly had we been in Rome a week when my darling pater caught malarial fever. He was dangerously ill for weeks, I watched by his bedside night and day. Thank God he recovered, but the convalescence was long. We moved to Mentone as soon as possible, so that we have only just returned to London."

"What a terrible strain you have had through all those weary months!"

"Yes, indeed. Often I thought of writing—nay, I think I must have begun about twenty letters, but I did not know how to write to you." She hesitated and blushed. "I tore them up and made up my mind I should come to see you as soon as I returned to London. We only arrived last night, so you see I have lost no time."

He bowed.

"It was very good of you, Miss Clyve."

She rose to go, but seemed half reluctant to do so, and lingered over the rearranging of her boa.

"Won't you come and dine with us quite in a friendly way, Dr. Carruthers?"

"No, thank you, Miss Clyve, my professional duties never leave me time for any social functions."

She sighed.

"Stern duty, I suppose. You wish this to be our final interview, Dr. Carruthers?"

"Believe me, Miss Clyve, it is best so."

"As you will. Good-bye," and she held out her hand to him.

As he took it, a mad impulse possessed him to press this dainty little hand to his lips, but pride again mastered him, and he relinquished the hand which was so willing to be detained in his. Beryl stepped into her carriage while Carruthers, erect and stern-looking, stood by. She waved one last farewell to him, and then the carriage drove off.

"I know he loves me," she murmured, "so I don't care one little bit for his stern duty and all that rubbish. I shall conquer in the end——"

* * * * *

Another couple of months went by and Meredith Carruthers heard nothing more of Beryl Clyve.

One morning James ushered into his study a lady very quietly and unobtrusively dressed.

"Miss Clyve," exclaimed Meredith, in glad but astonished surprise.

"Yes, I am glad, Dr. Carruthers, that you have not quite forgotten me. I am in sore trouble, and I want your help and advice."

He scanned her white face anxiously.

"You may command my services, Miss Clyve. I shall do everything in my power to help you, though I am afraid I can do but little."

Still holding her hand, he drew an easy chair towards her, and she let herself fall wearily on the seat. She seemed terribly agitated and unnerved.

"Dr. Carruthers, can you advise me—I wish to begin training as a hospital nurse; how am I to go about it?"

He laughed incredulously.

"*You*, Miss Clyve? A hospital nurse?"

"Yes, I would rather do that than be a governess to exacting, spoilt children, or companion to some cross-grained old lady, and I *must* earn my bread. My father is ruined; to-morrow the whole of London will talk of nothing else—the failure of Richard Clyve's firm."

She stopped abruptly, and, hiding her face on the cushion, she sobbed convulsively. In a second Meredith Carruthers was kneeling by her.

"Miss Clyve—Beryl, my darling, do not give way so, this is terrible news indeed; but be brave—let me help you to bear the burden. If I am not absolutely repellent to you, give me the right to stand by you and guard you from all evil and trouble. Beryl, will you consent to be my wife?"

A long, shuddering sob was the only answer to this appeal.

"Beryl," he resumed sadly, "I know a marriage with me is but a poor lookout for you, but 'tis better for you than to battle your way alone in this hard, cruel world. I cannot bear to think of you, my delicate, dainty darling, struggling to earn your daily bread. Beryl, in pity to yourself, try to love me a little. I shall work and toil so for you if you will only grant me the privilege of doing so."

He put his arm round her waist and drew her bowed head down on his shoulder.

"Nay, Beryl, my darling, I shall not kiss you till you give me leave. Won't you give me an answer? Surely you cannot be so absolutely indifferent to me, when you yourself sought me out in your hour of sore trouble and need?"

"Oh, Dr. Carruthers, forgive me—I never realised how terribly hard it would be—but I love you so—I love you so!" she wailed out in piteous, broken sentences.

"Beryl, you love me! I thank God for this priceless treasure of a good woman's love," and he imprinted a kiss on her lips.

But this kiss seemed to burn her as if she had been branded with a hot iron. She sprang away from his encircling clasp and fled to the couch where months before she had lain while he tended her. He followed her.

"Beryl, what is the meaning of this? You say you love me and yet you shrink from me as if you hated me."

"Alas, it is *you* who will shrink from me when you know all. Doctor Carruthers, I am not a good woman, as you called me just now. I came to you with a lie on my lips."

"A lie from you. Beryl—why, it is impossible!"

"You have told me you loved me, you have asked me to be your wife, Meredith"—she breathed his Christian name very softly, as if almost afraid to use it—"nothing can alter *that!*"

"No, indeed, no power on earth or in Heaven!"

She flung herself into his arms.

"Oh, Meredith, do not spurn me from you when you know all; if I have done wrong, it is out of my great love for you. For weeks past I have dwelt on this one subject—how to conquer your pride and force you into telling me you loved me—and I planned the little scheme I have carried out, but it overwhelms me with shame to think of it; in theory it seemed so easy, in practice it makes me feel so despicably false. I told you a hideous lie. My father is not ruined, all I said to you just now was absolutely false."

Meredith Carruthers only her closer in his embrace

"Beryl, my poor child, I alone am to blame; it was my stubborn pride which drove you to take this step."

She gave a little gasp.

"Oh, Meredith, you will not cast me off, then; you will love me still?"

"My precious darling, a thousand times more than before, now that I realise the sacrifice your great love for me impelled you to make; your true, loyal nature degraded itself into telling this falsehood, no matter how abhorrent the action was to you, all for love of me! While I let my ungovernable pride rule supreme and tried to crush the cravings of my intense love for you—ay, and worse than all, I bruised and blighted your tender heart. Ah, Beryl, my darling, how much nobler you are than I am. It is I who crave your forgiveness for all I have so selfishly made you suffer."

"What nonsense, Meredith, and please don't go to the other extreme and make a heroine of me. It was all sheer selfishness on my part, because I simply could not do without you!

"And so, Dr. Carruthers," she looked up archly at him, "there is to be no more talk of stern duty."

"No," he laughed, "I see now that my stern duty lies another way, in the matrimonial line!"

Lily Butler.

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A Question of Women's Rights.

Which Brought About the Marriage of Gerald Sinclair and Ethel Walrond.

ALTHOUGH I have from time to time described life at Laburnum Villa (inhabited by Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Sinclair), I do not think I have ever told you how these two came to meet one another, and finally to become engaged. I will, therefore, endeavour to set down to the best of my ability and remembrance this history.

It was in the early summer of the year 189—, one of the nineties, at any rate, that Gerald Sinclair was lazing aimlessly in the Park, when his shoulder was smitten violently in that fond way that our athletic friends have. When he had recovered sufficiently, Gerald turned round, his hand being grasped by a particular friend in the shape of Richard Cunnyngham, Esq., better known as Dick.

"Hullo, Gerald, my boy! Just the man I wanted to see!" An analysis of this speech will reveal the island of which the speaker was a native.

"What's up, Dick, why so enthusiastic?"

"It's like this, old chap! I've promised to take someone with me to-night to dinner at the Ansteys', and you're just the chap."

"But I don't know the Ansteys," protested Gerald.

"Of course you don't! They knew that when they asked me to bring someone, and I suggested your name. So you must come."

"Well, I haven't anything else on to-night, so I might as well."

"That's all right, then. After dinner Miss Walrond is going to talk on 'Women's Rights.'"

"Wh—at?" cried Gerald, who began to regret that he had agreed to go. "How disgusting! If there's anything I detest, it's the 'Women's Rights' woman."

"My boy, Ethel Walrond is a fair stunner. Jolly nice-looking girl, and a ripper to talk to. If it wasn't for that fad of hers she'd knock spots off any girl I know."

That is how it happened that Gerald dined that particular evening at 18 Carlton Terrace, and made the acquaintance of Miss Ethel Walrond in the following quaint manner.

There was a large crowd at the Ansteys' that night, several of whom Gerald knew, and a number more to whom he was introduced, but hadn't the faintest idea who they were.

Eventually he found himself alongside a young lady of prepossessing appearance, and there he decided to anchor. They conversed as is customary at these gatherings. First of the occasion, then of the weather, then of theatres, and then of anything they could think of. They were in that last stage when Gerald said with his usual bluntness,

"I understand some lady is going to make herself ridiculous after dinner."

"Oh!" rejoined his companion. "What is she going to do?"

"Speak about women's rights," replied Gerald in a very disgusted tone. "Much better if she'd stay at home and—and—er—and look after the children."

"I don't think Miss Walrond has any children to look after," came the answer, accompanied by a delicious laugh.

"Well, at any rate," answered Gerald, somewhat discomfited, "she oughtn't to make an exhibition of herself. One of these women who want to wear trousers and smoke pipes, and all that sort of thing, I suppose."

His companion leant back and gave vent to a peal of laughter.

"You are too ridiculous!" she gasped eventually.

"I'm quite serious," cried Gerald, to whom this subject was as a red rag to a bull. "I call it perfectly disgusting, and a disgrace to the sex for a woman to make such an exhibition of herself. I can imagine her—wears spectacles, short, straight hair, freckles, plain as they make 'em. That's like her, isn't it?" He had quite forgotten Dick Cunnyngham's description.

"Well, not very much. She doesn't wear glasses, and I don't think she has any freckles. She has quite a curly lot of hair too."

"H'm! Do you yourself believe in this Women's Rights business?"

"Oh, yes, most certainly I do!" quickly came the decided response.

"Really?" Gerald queried in a discomfited tone. "Well, I am surprised. Surely you don't think that woman should give up her sacred duties and go out and work amongst men?"

"I do, when a woman has nobody to fall back upon, as thousands have not. What is she to do, starve? Woman can keep womanly, although she works for her own living."

And then ensued a long discussion on that much discussed question, Gerald standing against it tooth and nail, laughing at its advocates, and particularly Miss Ethel Walrond.

They were only interrupted by the announcement of dinner. Dick Cunnyngham suddenly appeared saying Gerald was to take in Miss Walrond. Gerald's face became gloomy, and he turned to his companion saying:

"Well, isn't that rough on a fellow? I have to take in the person I object to most in this select gathering. It is a shame. And he gazed sorrowfully at his companion's sweet face.

"By the way," he suddenly said, "which is Miss Walrond?"

"I am afraid you happen to be talking to her just now," was the low reply.

"I—but I'm talking to you!" spluttered Gerald.

"Yes, and I am Ethel Walrond."

"Oh-h-h!" He had bitten the dust absolutely. Why didn't the floor open and swallow him? What an absolute ass he felt. He must say something or do something. But what could he say or do? All the time Miss Walrond was gazing at him with a very amused expression.

"You oughtn't to do it, you know, Miss Walrond," Gerald

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at last blurted out. What she ought not to have done was not very clear. "I'm awfully sorry, though. You see, I didn't think—that is, I didn't know—er—that is, of course—er—oh, let's go in to dinner. Unless you won't have anything to do with me now," he added as an afterthought.

That evening ranked in Gerald's mind as absolutely the most enjoyable of his whole existence. Notwithstanding the very vexed question of Women's Rights, which went very much against the grain, he managed to fairly well monopolise all Miss Walrond's spare moments.

At the conclusion of the evening there was some misunderstanding over the carriages, and Miss Walrond found herself without the wherewithal wherein to ride. This was Gerald's opportunity, and he jumped at it.

"Will you allow me to see you home?" he asked. "I have a hansom waiting, and I shall be only too delighted to help you along."

"But won't it be out of your way?"

"Oh, dear no," cried Gerald, "I go very close to your home!"

"It's very kind of you, I am sure!" she exclaimed as Gerald assisted her into the cab.

"Will you excuse me for one moment?" he said, and then rushed back into the house.

Oh, mankind! Verily thou art the flower of hypocrisy, and Gerald Sinclair, thou, too, art an orchid of the species. For why was it he begged to be excused? Simply this, that he might find out where Miss Walrond lived. And he had just assured her that his way lay quite close to where she lived. Oh, Gerald, Gerald!

Never would he forget that ride. To feel her so close to him. The very contact sent the blood tingling delightfully through his veins. To him, this very ordinary conveyance was a corner of Paradise. How he blessed that horse, too, which was very slow, and which moved slightly as he helped Miss Walrond out, which necessitated him clasping her with both arms to prevent her falling, and also meant half a crown extra for the driver.

Gerald lay awake that night, or rather morning, thinking. And when he did sleep he dreamt. The subject of both thoughts and dreams, it is needless to add, was Ethel Walrond.

Time went on; occasionally they met at garden parties, and once at a house-party up the river. The house they were both staying at was near by Marlow, and their sojourn extended to almost a week. Blissful memory! It was a remarkable thing that Gerald should happen to be catching the identical train back to town that his divinity did, but such was the case, anyhow.

"This time next week I shall be in the West of England," remarked Ethel, as the train sped on towards London, with what seemed to Gerald absolutely unnecessarily rapid speed.

"Will you really, Miss Walrond? What a strange coincidence, for I myself will be down there too. I shall be on a cycling tour." The excessively diplomatic Gerald, whilst intending to go away, had not at all made up his mind where to go until the last two minutes. He knew, too, that a cycling tour covers a multitude of towns, so that he could always turn up wherever he found it necessary to suit his desire.

Paddington was reached all too soon, and Gerald sorrowfully observed that the Walronds' carriage was there to meet his companion.

"I wonder if she really does care for me?" he mused. "She always seems pleased to see me and to enjoy my society."

This was entirely free from conceit, I can assure you.

However, Gerald saw nothing more of the girl of his heart until in the West of England he—but I am too hasty.

The Walrond family were bound for Lynmouth, where they generally spent a few weeks every year. Lynmouth is an ideal place, lying as it does on the border of two of the fairest counties in England—to wit, Somerset and Devon. There it is, too, that they that honeymoon abound.

Well, it came about that the Walronds duly arrived at Lynmouth, and proceeded to enjoy themselves to the best of their abilities. It also came about that Gerald started on his cycling tour through the West. His first day's ride ended at Chippenham, where he put up for the night at the old hostelry of Patterdown. And the next day, passing through Bath, Wells, Bridgwater, and Watchet, right across lovely Somersetshire, he arrived at Minehead.

Minehead is, or was at the time I write about, an old-fashioned, quaint West Country town, and here Gerald had elected to make his headquarters. Awaiting him at the "Plume of Feathers" was his portmanteau, forwarded there by his directions.

On the following morning, after an early dip, Gerald elected to have a run through the country round about and up on to Exmoor. He started away through Watchet and then bore sharply to the right, skirting North Hill until he was near to Lynmouth.

"I wonder if I might cycle in and call?" he said, apparently addressing a small sparrow, who, with head on one side, was regarding this human being with a most cheeky air. His sole audience gave no reply and manifested slight interest in his concerns by flying home to Mrs. Sparrow and family.

"It's a bit soon," added Gerald. "Besides, I'm in my cycling togs. But that would certainly be more in keeping with my cycling tour. But, still, I think I'll wait a bit!"

He rode on several miles further until just where the road crosses the Lynn and rises over Wodley Hill he dismounted. The road stretched away downhill for some long distance, eventually turning sharply at the edge of a deep pool, called Wodley Pool, which was locally reputed to be bottomless.

The scene before him, as he meditatively gazed over his pipe, was most beautiful. A rolling stretch of low, wooded hill with pasture land in the valleys. Occasional streams wandered, seemingly at their will. Here and there tiny hamlets lay snug in a wooded fold, whilst around the edge of the picture lay the seeming infinity of the ocean.

Then Gerald turned to look above him; for he had paused, as I said, in the centre of this long hill. Suddenly a cyclist appeared over the brow and commenced to rapidly descend. Then, as he looked, Gerald saw the arms of the cyclist give a sudden jerk downwards, and then he saw the rider held the handlebars apart from the machine.

"Good Heavens!" he cried. "It's a girl, and she's smashed her handlebars, and—— Good Heavens! It's Ethel!"

For now the machine, with its helpless rider sitting in the saddle with nothing to steer with or hold by, had flashed past him. The consciousness of her great danger was written on her face, which was still and white as marble. The machine was running steadily with the free wheel in action, the rider holding in her hands the broken handlebar with the useless brake hanging limply thereto.

As she flew past Gerald, he jumped at his machine and in a second was tearing madly down the hill after her. Still her machine ran steadily, but he knew that she would never get round the corner by Wodley Pool. The front wheel of her bicycle, too, might hit a stone, which would mean that the machine would turn and throw its rider. And at the pace at which she was travelling that would have almost the gravest of consequences.

On, on, he tore, but his quarry had had a good start of him. On, on, he pedalled, as he had never pedalled in his life before, and every minute that fearful corner grew closer and closer. And now he was so near that the whirl of the wheels of her machine was quite apparent. Then he cried out to her:

"Keep calm, Ethel; I'm here—Gerald Sinclair!"

Then he put every ounce into his work and closed right up, nerving himself for the final effort. The corner by Wodley Pool was now only about two hundred yards off, and it must be now or never!

He was tearing along beside her, but he dared neither look nor speak, the tension was too great. With a hasty glance at the speeding landscape on the right of him, for Wodley Pool was on the left, and with a silent prayer, he suddenly threw his left arm round the waist of Ethel Walrond, and with a vicious tug, turned his flying bicycle into the hedge.

As he turned he took his remaining hand from the bars and held Ethel from him with both arms, whilst, with a tear-

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ing, sickening crash, he was thrown violently into the hedge.

And then it seemed he fell down—down, all the time holding Ethel out of danger. On and on he seemed to fall until he lay so peacefully, as it were, in the deep blue sea which always seemed to be below him as he was falling. Then he remembered nothing more until he opened his eyes and they encountered those of Ethel Walrond.

His wandering gaze wandered round the room wherein he lay. He didn't know it at all, and what was Ethel doing? Why did his arm hurt so?

"Oh, thank Heaven!" murmured Ethel, as she saw his eyes open. But when she saw the wondering, vacant gaze, she bent over him, crying:

"It is I, Ethel Walrond. Don't you know me, Mr. Sinclair?"

"Yes, I know you, Ethel," came the feeble response. A blush dyed her face as he used her Christian name, which became more and more pronounced as the sufferer, with his glance running vacantly around the room, muttered: "Ethel dear, my Ethel!" Then he relapsed into unconsciousness again.

It appeared that in falling he had broken his right arm and sustained a slight concussion of the brain. But, beyond the shock, Ethel had received no injury whatever. Her bicycle had jumped the fence of Wodley Pool and lay secure in the mud at the bottom thereof, where it is doubtless lying this very day. Gerald had been picked up and carried into a neighbouring house, where the inhabitants had, like good Samaritans, taken him in and cared for him.

A doctor had soon arrived from Minehead, and in a couple of days, with the exception of his broken arm, Gerald was high on the road to perfect health.

Ethel had constituted herself as his nurse, and Gerald told himself he would willingly have broken both arms and legs to have secured such attendance. How sweetly she had thanked him too, and he was ready to swear that he had felt her hand moving back the hair from his forehead when he was supposed to have been unconscious.

She was at his bedside now with that confounded medicine the physician had sent him. He gulped it down and returned the glass. As Ethel went to take it their hands met, the glass fell from Gerald's grasp on to the bed, and he held her hand a safe prisoner.

"Ethel," he whispered, "don't go away from me."

Shyly she gazed at him, and then, kneeling down by the bedside so that his left arm incircled her, she softly said:

"I don't want to, Gerald." Then, tenderly, so as not to disturb the broken arm, she placed her arms around his neck and kissed him on the lips, whilst he, hardly knowing whether he was awake or dreaming, strained her to him as well as he was able with his one sound arm.

"Now I can thank you properly for my life!" she whispered. And she did.

And that is how Ethel Walrond became Mrs. Gerald Sinclair. And that is why she gave up her work in connection with "Women's Rights," although they always bless the cause because that was the first thing that brought them together.

E. Newton Bungey.

[*Other Laburnum Villa stories which have already appeared are*:

"A Romance of an Unpaid Bill."—February 21st.
"What's in a Name?"—May 16th.
"Vice-Versa."—May 30th.]
"The Gentle Art of Cooking."—June 20th.

"Herbert is just a plain, everyday young man," said Mabel to her father. "There's precisely the objection," was the prompt reply. "I might stand him every other day, but this business of calling seven times a week is getting tiresome."

Your Editor Chats.

The fourth list of letters in the Juggled Letters Competition is published on page 807. Back numbers containing the lists that have already appeared can be had through any newsagent or direct from this office.

On page 823 you will find a story called "A Matter of Course." This is the eighth of the series of Love Problems which appear from time to time. The problem dealt with this week is "Should a Husband be a Complacent Person?" I shall be glad to have my readers' views on the subject, as to whether they agree with the story or not. If any readers care to send suggestions for Love Problems suitable for working up into stories, I shall be pleased to pay five shillings for each idea used. Mark your envelope "Love Problem."

Next week's cover will consist of a reproduction of the "Clan Macfie" Tartan. This makes the tenth tartan which has appeared in this way. Scottish readers should ask their newsagents to be sure to save them a copy of next week's issue.

This week sees the finish of the tales told in the Brighton express—the last one, "Mrs. Lyndsey's Daughter," is on page 826. From the many letters I have received I am glad to hear that they have been much appreciated by readers. A new series will be coming along shortly, full particulars of which will be announced in due course.

On the last page of *Pearson's Weekly* this week it will be seen that a number of kind friends have sent money enough to the Fresh Air Fund to defray the expenses of a whole party of children. The day on which these children go into the country will be called by the donor's name. If *you* send along £8 2s. or more, *your* name will be given to a day.

It is not necessary that the money should come out of your own pocket entirely. You can collect it or raise it by some other means—holding a bazaar or jumble sale, or something of that sort. If you cannot afford to send, or are not able to raise so much as £8 2s., smaller amounts will be very acceptable. It is impossible to have too much money. The number of children wanting a day in the country is always increasing, and at present the Fund is only able to touch the large towns.

Many smaller towns contain large numbers of children who are equally in want of a breath of country air, but they have to be left out owing to lack of means. Every little helps to swell the total, so do not mind sending a few pence even. Ninepence pays for one child. It is so easy to get a few stamps or postal order and inclose them in an envelope addressed to the Hon. Sec., Fresh Air Fund, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. Won't you go out to the post-office *now?* All amounts will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*. Collecting forms can be had on application.

Your Editor.

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Below is Our Great New Serial.

THE BOND BETWEEN.

A Romance of Real Life. By BLANCHE EARDLEY.

The First Chapters.

Lady Maitland is the young second wife of Sir Trevor Maitland of Maitland Manor, Melton. She captivates everyone by her extreme beauty. Sir Trevor has three children—Jack, Agnes, and Muriel—by his first wife, and an only son, Woolf, by the present Lady Maitland.

Shortly after Sir Trevor's second marriage a baby-girl is found in the Manor grounds. She is intrusted to the care of Mrs. Parkins, the lodgekeeper's wife. The name of Ivy Strange is given to the child, and at the time of our story Jack Maitland is in love with her.

Heriot North, an old friend of the family, who visits the Manor to pay his addresses to Agnes, succumbs to the charms of Sir Trevor's young wife, to the great chagrin of Agnes, who is accordingly neglected. There is nothing Lady Maitland will not do for her boy Woolf. One evening when she goes to her room to dress for dinner she finds there an ex-convict and burglar—Mike Holland—who says that he was in gaol with her first husband, and unless she pays him well to keep silence he will blazon to the world the fact that she is a bigamist.

Lady Maitland protests that her first husband is dead, but to preserve the good name of her boy she consents to pay the price, and intrusts Heriot North with the first payment, twenty pounds, which is to be left at a certain place in London for Holland to call for.

Ivy Strange refuses to become engaged to Jack until the mystery of her birth is cleared up. This her lover promises to do, and to start with interviews Mrs. Parkins. The only information he gleans from her is that on Ivy's brow—hidden under her curls—when she was a baby there was a mark like the mark of a broad arrow! Jack goes to London to consult a detective, Gilbert Chase. Afterwards at his club he meets Digby Scarlett, a celebrated explorer. Scarlett accepts Jack's invitation to accompany him to Maitland Manor.

Lady Maitland recognises Scarlett as a man she had known during her first husband's lifetime, and she perceives that she is recognised, but for Woolf's sake she determines to stand her ground. During his stay at the Manor, Scarlett saves Ivy Strange from being ill-treated by Mike Holland.

Heriot North leaves his house, "The Hollies," to call at the Manor after dinner, and while passing through the wood hears the voices of a man and woman; the latter he thinks he recognises as belonging to Lady Maitland, but when he mentions the incident to her she says that it must have been Ivy—their voices are similar.

One evening, after Scarlett's return to town, he is told on arriving at his chambers that a man is waiting to see him. Something warns him of possible danger, and he slips a revolver into his pocket, then he goes to the door of his sitting-room and, softly turning the handle, walks in. As he does so a figure rises from a chair and comes forward slowly.

Digby Scarlett's fingers touch lightly the trigger of the revolver in his pocket.

FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

"Hast Thou Found Me, oh! Mine Enemy?"

"Who are you?" Digby Scarlett said sharply, standing near the door, still keeping his hand in his pocket, and eyeing the silent figure with startled eyes.

"Who am I?" replied the man, with a hollow laugh, and choosing his words painfully, as though speech were strange to him. "*You* ask *me* that! You, upon whose mind my name should be written in letters of blood! You, whose black villainy robbed me of my manhood—my ambition—my wife! *You* ask my name, Digby Scarlett—you, the murderer of my life!"

Digby Scarlett recoiled before the burning passion of his unbidden guest's words, and his eyes fell under the savage invective of the shabby, white-haired man who had flung so strange a challenge in his teeth. He put his disengaged hand to his lip, and stroked his moustache—the old habit returning, while on his brow a few drops of moisture stood.

"I am still at a loss to recollect your name," he said slowly. "Of course your—your strange language I can only attribute to—*one* cause!"

A dark flush stained the pallid, wrinkled face of the man, and a wild gleam flashed into his sunken eyes.

"Ah! so you want to persuade yourself that I am drunk, do you?" he panted. "Have you not done with perjury yet, Digby Scarlett? Do the old tricks still cling to you after all these years?"

Digby Scarlett glanced at him keenly. The threadbare coat hung on his spare frame like a rag on a peg, the unshaven chin revealed a not too recent visit to the barber's, while his whole appearance was similar to that of a strong young tree struck suddenly into premature old age by a lightning flash.

The keen eyes of Digby Scarlett noticed all—the poverty, the broken physique, and the empty, quivering hands, rough and discoloured-looking, as though the owner of them had done much manual labour. He smiled, and withdrew from his pocket his own well-shaped hand with its delicately manicured nails. There was no need for such precaution; one blow from his strong arm would be all the defence he would need should the man before him attempt to wipe out any debts—supposed, or otherwise!

"So," he said slowly, "you are the convict chap, are you? What do you want with me? I can't afford to give you money!"

"Do you think I have sought for you all these years that I have been free," the man panted hoarsely, "for the pleasure of begging from you? No, Digby Scarlett, you and I have a long-standing score to settle, and I mean there to be no balance to carry over! I saw you by a happy chance, leaving the hotel yesterday. I knew you, in spite of your moustache; for the years could add much, but they left your eyes the same!" He paused to wipe his brow with a shaking hand, and on the other he supported himself against the back of a chair.

Digby Scarlett shrugged his shoulders. It was obvious that he had a madman to deal with; he would let him rave, then kick him out!

"Why," said the man, speaking with clear emphasis—"why did you go to the house yesterday, where the blow

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first fell, after you had done your diabolical work? What took you there?"

Digby Scarlett started, and for an instant his eyes flickered with a strange light. Then he laughed shortly:

"When I know for what purpose you have come here, I may consider any question you ask me."

"I have come," said the man, in a low, intense voice, "to get from you a confession of the infamy you perpetrated on me, so that I may go into the world—a beggar, perhaps, but with my name cleared from dishonour."

"Very pleasant—from your point of view!" sneered Digby Scarlett, "but where do I come in?"

"I vowed," continued the voice, unheeding the interruption, "to wrest that confession from you; to force it from your false throat with my fingers if need be!"

He took a step towards the man he had waited so long to meet, and half raised his hands as though to put his words into practice, and Digby Scarlett's fingers once again sought the derringer in his pocket, this time to bring it out and show it to the man, whose breath was rising to his lips in deep-drawn gasps.

"You see," he said coolly, "I am armed, and I warn you that any attempt to touch me will only end in throwing you into the place you have so recently left! With your reputation so well known to the police, I fancy you would not get the success you expect!

"It would be a difficult thing to set about," he sneered. "An ex-ticket-of-leave man blackmailing and threatening the man whose name he forged in the first place! I should advise you to think better of your great idea, or else spend a few thousands in procuring legal assistance in establishing your good name."

"You fiend!" burst from the lips of the baffled man. "You still have the devil on your side! I see now to strike you as I first intended would only be playing into your hands. As for the legal assistance!" he laughed bitterly, "you did well to suggest it to me, since I stand such a pitiful beggar before you! But don't think I shall forget!" he went on passionately. "The day will come yet; for God can't hide His face for ever from me, and then, Digby Scarlett, in the hour of my triumph, you will cry in vain for mercy! I will follow you, even if I do it on foot; dog your footsteps, and wait, as I have waited eighteen years! For all the shame I have endured *you* shall pay!"

He stopped and drew the back of his hand across his brow; it was pouring with the sweat of his soul's agony.

"I am going now," he said dully. "I am looking for someone else—my wife—Margaret!"

"Ah! I fancy I can tell you something about her," Digby Scarlett replied carelessly, placing the derringer on the table by his side and lighting a cigar.

"*You!*" breathed the man hoarsely. "You—know! Don't tell me that—that——" He stopped, and a red gleam shot from his eyes.

"Don't be alarmed!" sneered the other. "I saw her last when you did. I left England the day after. I read in a Continental paper sometime later that——"

"What?" gasped the man with livid lips. "For the love of Heaven have some mercy! Tell me, quickly!"

"That she—your wife, was—dead!"

"Dead!" he murmured. "Dead! Little Margaret—dead! I wanted to see her—to tell her that I was innocent!" Suddenly he caught his breath. "You are not lying, are you? Can I trust you now, after all your infamy?"

Digby Scarlett smiled: "You can, for it does not concern me now, whether she lived or died. That's why," he said quickly. "I called at the house to which you followed me yesterday. I learnt that her—baby—had died with her!"

He turned his back to throw some coal on the fire, and the stifled cry that came from the lips of the man sent a gleam into his eyes.

"Her baby!" murmured the broken-down wreck of manhood. "Oh, my God! I can't stand this! It is the last drop in my cup of bitterness!"

His hollow, panic-stricken eyes fell on the stooping figure of the man who had laid his life waste with such devastation, and robbed him of honour, wife, and child; and as he gazed there came into his mind the thought that makes murderers of men.

He looked round the room, and his eyes lighted on the derringer his enemy had left on the table.

Swiftly he leant forward and his fingers closed on it firmly; then he laughed, a low, gurgling laugh that sent the heart of Digby Scarlett into his mouth. It was the laugh of a man who had won an advantage.

He wheeled round quickly to meet the exultant, mocking eyes of the ex-ticket-of-leave-man, with death written in their depths; and his lips twitched under his dark moustache as the glittering light fell on the thing in the hand of the man he had wronged. It was his only weapon.

"So the tables are turned, Scarlett! You are in my power now! It is I who will make terms, and you who will obey them!" said the man grimly.

Digby Scarlett put out his hand to steady himself; as he did so he touched an electric button on the wall, still keeping his eyes on his enemy.

"Well," he said, after a pause, "what do you want me to do? You certainly have the game in your hands at present!" and an ugly smile crossed his mouth.

"Sit down and write your confession that will clear me from the charge of forgery!" replied the man loudly. "Although I have lost my wife and child, I will not rest until I have avenged their deaths, and let the world know that the man who was husband and father, was no felon!"

Digby Scarlett drew a chair forward, and sat down at the table, under the barrel of the derringer that was pointing straight at him. Death had been nearer to him in the wilds of Central Africa, but he had never feared it so much as now.

"And if I refuse?" he said, looking past the man at the door. "What then?"

"Unless your confession is in my hands in three minutes," said the other calmly, "I shall shoot you, then—myself! I don't want to live now; but I shall see that you don't live after me! Now write! I will time you!"

Scarlett took up a pen and examined the point. His eyelids were twitching and his teeth chattered as with sudden fever; a terrible wonder seizing him as to the strength of the button on the wall! In that had lain his one deliverance!

Suppose——!

A cold sweat broke out all over him.

"One—two!" said the monotonous voice of the man who waited to kill him; and with another furtive glance at the door, Digby Scarlett dipped the pen in the ink.

Suddenly the handle of the door turned, and instantaneously both men started. The next moment a servant entered the room, and looked from one to the other.

"Yes, sir?" he said, turning to Digby Scarlett, who once more resumed his haughty pose, while the other man shivered, put the revolver on the table, and grew again the outcast and degraded felon.

"Yes, I rang for you to show this—gentleman out," said Digby Scarlett. Then, turning to his visitor, he said smilingly:

"Good-night! Perhaps this will be of some use to you," and he held out a piece of gold.

The man took it silently; then dropped it on the floor, and ground it with his heel.

"Beggar as I am," he cried passionately, "I refuse blood-money!"

Then, turning to the door, he followed the wondering servant downstairs and went out into the night.

Digby Scarlett flung himself into a chair and wiped his brow.

"Phew! I almost imagined that my luck had turned! The felon nearly got his own back!"

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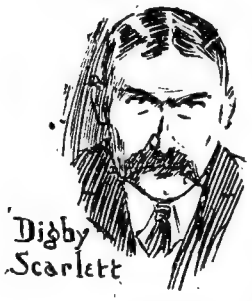

He rose, and staggered across to the sideboard where a decanter stood, and poured out a glass of neat brandy. He raised it to his lips with a laugh.

"Here's to the 'dead Margaret' and—and," his laugh died away, "to my future wife, 'Ivy Strange'!"

* * *

It was dark on the bridge, and the man looking over into the dull, glittering water, shivered, and drew back.

"Not to-night!" he murmured. "Somehow I lack now the spirit to take my own miserable life, when a few moments ago I would gladly have taken two!"

He walked on, then stopped, and raised his face to the stars that sparkled in the sky.

"I wonder which of you is the 'little one'!" he said sadly. "Perhaps she who spurned me is with you—her larger light guiding your lesser one! I cannot die with the eyes of my loved ones looking on!"

He hurried away, and, after a time, reached a poor street in the East End, in one of the houses of which he rented a room. He entered it wearily, and turned to go supperless to bed, when a voice stopped him.

"'Ere's a letter come for you, Mr. Grant!"

He took it silently. He sometimes heard from editors regarding some wretched contribution he had sent them, and which more often than not, came back doomed by the poor address.

"Another refusal!" he said bitterly. "Ah, well! There is one post left to me which I shall fill soon!"

He opened the letter; then, after a moment's bewilderment, read the curt inclosure:

Messrs. Black and Stackpool, having given your MS. entitled 'The Pariah,' due consideration, have agreed to accept it on their usual terms, pending your approval. Kindly call here 10.30 *to-morrow.*"

"Accepted! Accepted!" he murmured, a great, dry sob quivering in his throat, and filling his eyes with mists. "It means money—money; and money spells revenge!"

He dropped the letter on the wooden table, and flung his arms out in a passion of grief.

"And I have no one to share it! No one to rejoice in it! In my joy I shall live alone, as in my sorrow!"

He sank into a chair and buried his head in his hands, and the cry that his joy wrung from him was:

"Too late! Too late! Too late!"

SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Gilbert Chase Takes Notes.

The bar parlour of the "New Age" Inn was always full, on market days especially, for through the villages of Chorlton and Melton many farmers passed on their way to Leicester, and on a cold, wet night the warm, cosy inn was an alluring temptation to all sorts and conditions of men.

The landlord, David Snaffle, was superintending his one barmaid, and serving in the bar himself, exchanging racing tips with one or two chosen companions. The entrance of a quiet-looking man with mild blue eyes and an unobtrusive manner was not noticed, and the stranger, after a casual glance round the bar, ordered a plate of cold beef and a whisky-and-soda.

"Can you let me have a room here for a night or two?" he said, when the barmaid attended to his wants.

"I don't know, sir," she said. "I'll ask Mr. Snaffle."

The landlord was asked, and came forward eagerly. "Well, sir, we have one room vacant we shall be pleased to let you 'ave. It's plain and homely, but clean."

The quiet-looking man smiled. "That will do amply. My wants are small, and I will take my meals down here, I like to see cheerful faces round me. By the way," he went on, buttering a piece of bread, "do you often have strangers down in these parts?"

"On and off, sir," replied the landlord; "mostly tramps, and such like on their way to other towns."

"Ah!" and the blue eyes flickered with a sudden interest. "Is this village Chorlton or Melton? I am afraid I am a bit shaky in my geography."

"This is Melton, sir. Chorlton is five miles yonder; and I'm glad it is Melton, too!"

"How's that?" queried the stranger.

"Because, sir," replied the man, "there's not many places of this sort blessed with such a squire and lady as Sir Trevor Maitland and 'is wife."

"Humph! A kindly old couple, I suppose?"

David Snaffle laughed. "Well, sir, the Squire is getting on certainly; but 'is lady is 'is second wife, and no lovelier lady 'as ever been seen in these parts before, and as good as she is beautiful, too; and as for age, she is not more 'an a few years older than Mr. Jack, the Squire's heir, who sometimes drops in 'ere quite pleasant like. I've seen him grow up from a boy."

Just then the loquacious landlord was called away, and the stranger leisurely finished his supper. As he raised his glass to his lips the swing doors opened, and a man stood on the threshold, peering round with furtive eyes.

Suddenly he saw the smooth face and fair hair of the stranger as he was busy pouring his refreshing liquid down his throat, and, with a muffled cry, the man drew back quickly, but not before the pale blue eyes of the man with the glass had flashed into his own.

Outside he paused, and drew his hand across his ugly mouth.

"Wot's 'e doin' dahn 'ere?" he muttered. "Is 'e takin' up the burglaries, or," and his eyes grew scared, "is she playin' a game of bluff? I'll hurry it on, it's wiser to take a lump sum down and clear out afore questions are asked, than stay and 'ave things quered by Gilbert Chase!"

The next morning the stranger left the "New Age," and went for a stroll into the village. In the post-office he scribbled a short note, and calling a boy, told him to take it to Maitland Manor at once and give it into the hands of Mr. Jack Maitland.

The boy went off, and Gilbert Chase stood outside the post-office looking in the direction of the Manor with thoughtful eyes.

"I wonder what that old 'lag' was doing with his head inside the village pub of Melton?" he murmured. "I will make it my business to find out, just for professional curiosity's sake. But at present I am on more important business than looking after a beggar like that. Time enough when I hear he's wanted!"

As he lingered on the post-office steps, a smart dog-cart came rattling up and stopped right in front of him. In it were four people—a man and woman in front, a girl and a boy at the back. But the blue eyes of the ordinary-looking man on the steps dwelt in amazement upon the face of the woman holding the reins.

The boy dismounted and ran into the post-office, presently coming out with some stamps in his hand. "Here they are, mummie!" he cried. "I got them all in halfpenny stamps! They are such a pretty colour!"

The woman laughed—a laugh that made her look even younger. "Oh, Woolf! You will never do to go shopping for me! Imagine if I sent you to buy me some dresses!"

As they drove off Gilbert Chase looked after them with a puzzled frown, then, stepping back into the post-office, he asked for some stamps. As the woman served him he said carelessly: "What a pretty little chap that was that came in just now!"

"Yes," said the woman; "Sir Trevor is real proud of 'im, being 'is youngest son."

"Ah!" he said, folding his stamps and putting them into his pocket, "So the lady driving was Lady Maitland?"

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"She was," replied the woman; "and looks as young as she did when she came to Melton fifteen years ago!"

"Ah!" he said again; "she is certainly very beautiful." Then, when he was once more outside, he said to himself:

"I don't know if I am going silly, but I could almost have sworn that I had seen that face before. And I used to pride myself on my memory! Any way, I had better pull up, if I'm going to include the face of Sir Trevor Maitland's wife among my museum of horrors!"

After an aimless walk, he strolled along the road he had traversed earlier, when a voice hailed him. He turned round quickly.

"Is that you, Mr. Chase? said Jack Maitland. "I just got your note as I was leaving the Manor for a ride. I am glad you have come up; I was going to write to you."

"Well, Mr. Maitland," said the detective slowly, "it was no use my either writing or sending for you, or coming to see you, unless I had something to say."

"Then, from your presence here," said Jack eagerly, "I conclude you have some important news for me?"

"Not important," replied Gilbert Chase slowly; "rather interesting, though it may lead to an important clue later."

"What is it, then?" said Jack impatiently; the cold, impassive face of the detective damping his good spirits.

"I have found the woman who remembers the mark on the child's brow!"

"Where is she?" said Jack quickly. "Does she know the parents then?"

The man smiled, almost pityingly: "I advertised in several papers," he began slowly, "offering a sum of money—as you said expense was no object—for information regarding a girl nurse-child with a broad arrow on its brow, deserted about fourteen years ago. A few days later I had a dirty-looking letter from an address in Brentford saying the writer, a woman, could supply the information desired, but was unable to leave her home on account of being a cripple. Well, I went down there and saw the woman."

He paused and drew a cigar-case from his pocket. "It's not my way to smoke during a business chat, but if you don't mind, I will do so now, Mr. Maitland, it will keep me warm this cold day."

"Won't you come up to the house?" said Jack politely. "Or I will go with you to the 'New Age,' if you like?"

Gilbert Chase shook his head. "I don't want it to leak out that I am a detective," he said. "Last night I professed ignorance of these parts. It would not do for you to be coming to the 'New Age' with me this morning. But if I could have a quiet chat with you at the Manor, where I can go and come without attracting attention, it would be more comfortable for both of us."

"That will be all right," Jack said briskly, he was burning to hear what he had so longed to find out—the mystery of his sweetheart's birth. "I will say you are a messenger come to see me on important business, should I be asked."

They soon reached the Manor, and as Jack was crossing the hall with his guest, Lady Maitland came out of the library and watched them thoughtfully as they disappeared into Jack's special "den."

In the drawing-room she saw Muriel talking to Woolf, and, on seeing his mother, the boy said—

"Mummie, I just saw Jack coming in with the man who was standing on the Post Office steps when we drove into the village this morning."

"Yes," laughed Muriel, "he reminded me somehow of one of those detectives you read about in novels, Mother o' Pearl; a quiet, sly face, always trying to conceal the fact that he has a face at all!"

Lady Maitland laughed, but she did not hear the girl's speech.

"A detective!" she wondered, and a shiver shook her slight frame. "What is a detective doing at Maitland Manor?" Then her face cleared, and the light came back into her eyes.

"Why, of course, that foolish boy talked of seeking out the mysterious secret of his 'Ivy's' birth! That creature may probably be engaged on tracing it to a gipsy's van!"

In the meantime that "creature" was continuing his conversation with Jack Maitland, ignorant of the chance shot at his profession by Muriel Maitland.

"As I was saying, I saw the woman, who told me that before she was married she took in nurse-children, and that nearly sixteen years ago, so far as she could remember, a little girl baby of about a year old was brought to her by an elderly woman, who said she was to find a good home for the child, as the mother had gone to Australia, and when she returned she would send for it. A year's money was paid down and the child left, the woman gave the name of Mrs. Brown, but omitted to mention that of the child.

"Then," continued the calm, even voice of the detective, "this person, while bathing the girl one night, noticed the mark under the hair on the right side of the temple. It was very small, but quite easy to make out. But as the child's hair grew thick and long, it was not noticed.

"Well, exactly a year after, the same woman Brown called for the child and took it away with her, saying it was going back to its mother. Since then she had forgotten the incident until she saw my advertisement in the paper."

"And is that all?" said Jack, in a disappointed voice. "Was there no name on the linen; was nothing left behind?"

The detective shook his head. "I asked all those questions," he said shortly, "the child had been given into her hands in ready-made clothes; it left in the same sort. The only new discovery I made was an old bib, marked with 'G' or 'C.' She was not sure which baby it belonged to. Now, the next person to be found is Mrs. Brown."

He rose and looked out of the window; then turned round suddenly.

"Is there any chance of my being able to see this young lady without her knowing it? I just want a glimpse of her, that's all, as I suppose you never found that photograph you lost?"

"No, never. But I can ask her to look out of the window in the library," Jack replied. "She is in the house, I know, because she came up early to the Manor, then went with my young sister to do needlework or something."

"Very well," Gilbert Chase said. "I will walk round past your library window, as though mistaking my way, then turn back again, so I shall get two good looks at her."

Jack scribbled a few words on a piece of paper, then left the room. In the morning room he saw Muriel with his step-mother and Woolf.

"I want you, Kitten," he said. "I sha'n't keep you long."

The girl rose and followed him. "Do you know where Ivy is?" he murmured. "I want you to take this note to her."

"She was going to Mother o' Pearl's boudoir to copy some letters for her, some time ago," his sister replied. She was the only member of the family who approved of Jack loving the beautiful foundling.

"Then, Kitten, dear," Jack said smilingly. "I want you to take her this note at once."

"May I read it?" she laughed.

"Yes, there's nothing in it," he answered, "only a request. Go at once, dear,"

He left her and returned to his guest, while Muriel slowly wended her way to her step-mother's boudoir.

Suddenly she stopped, and a roguish smile lit up her face. "He said I might read it, so why not? I will just see what kind of a request it is."

She undid the folded piece of paper and read—

"Dearest,—*Will you stand in the library window for a few seconds until you see me pass? I won't be long, and my reason for asking you is very important.*"

"What a ridiculous request!" laughed the girl. "I've a good mind—! Yes, I will! He will be wild with me, though!"

Hastily returning, she sought the library, and went to the window

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that looked on to the path that wound round the house, and stood gazing out with an expectant look on her face.

At that moment Gilbert Chase parted from Jack. "I will go first," he said. "It will seem odd if I stand with you staring at her, then, after I have returned, you just walk briskly to the window and back again."

"Oh, bother!" said Muriel, with a yawn. "There's only that silly friend of Jack's gone by, probably mistaken his way, and now he actually has the insolence to stare at me too!" she exclaimed, as she met the intent gaze of her brother's visitor. He stood still for a moment, then, casting a puzzled glance round, retraced his steps and disappeared.

"I sha'n't wait," Muriel said. "I will give this note to Ivy now, and let her do his command. It is too slow for me!"

As she went out she met Ivy Strange at the door, looking pale and fragile.

"Ivy, Jack has sent you this note," she said quickly. "I know its contents," she added, laughing, seeing the girl blush. "And you are to stand in the window till he passes."

Ivy Strange stole up to the window in time to see her lover's face light up with a tender caress as he caught sight of her, and her tired violet eyes shone with a loving smile as she waved her white hand to him.

"Ah!" she murmured sadly. "If you only guessed, my darling, that I knew all concerning that fearful debt about which that horrible man is worrying Lady Maitland! But you never will, for I am trying to help her—and you—by taking him money from her!"

A short time afterwards, Gilbert Chase was sitting in the room he had engaged at the "New Age" Inn, before him was a substantial meal, and by the side of his plate there lay an open notebook, into which he occasionally glanced.

"Humph! Brown eyes and hair, rather cheeky-looking, but pretty! Nothing remarkable, though. I had an idea that she was fair, with unusual good looks. Anyway, there's nothing to keep me in Melton now, unless"—and he laughed softly—"unless I pay a visit to my friend, Mike. It shows a forgiving spirit to look up old pals!"

And no prophetic instinct warned the detective in what capacity he would pay his visit to the ex-convict.

SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

"I am your Father!"

THE new owner of the "Rest" had returned to Melton, and taken possession of his bachelor residence with a feeling of keen pleasure. Although the place was for the habitation of a single man, yet, strangely enough, it had been furnished for the reception of a mistress, and whispers were rife as to the unknown chatelaine Digby Scarlett was thinking upon.

The master of the "Rest" was occupied with thoughts very near the subject on the morning that he strolled across to pay a visit to his new friends, Sir Trevor and Lady Maitland, just ten days after his experience with the man who had so nearly extinguished his life.

A grim smile crossed his face as the memory of that evening came back to him, and as he inquired for the mistress of Maitland Manor the smile lingered in his eyes, and even his voice was more than usually caressing as he said to the servant:

"Tell Lady Maitland I would be most grateful if she could see me for a few moments; I have some news for her."

Lady Maitland was in her boudoir when the message was brought to her, and she knew that in the last words of it lay a challenge she dare not ignore. The gauntlet had been flung at her feet, and she must either pick it up or——! Her eyes fell on a certain photograph in a silver frame, and she made her choice.

When Digby Scarlett a few minutes later was shown into the boudoir he was received by a brilliantly beautiful woman with sparkling eyes and dimples lurking in the soft curves of cheek and chin.

"So you have returned to Melton for good, Mr. Scarlett?" she said gaily, her white fingers playing with the leaves of a crimson rose.

"Yes, Lady Maitland," he replied slowly, "I have returned; but whether for good or not time will show!"

"Time!" she laughed. "Surely time has nothing to do with our virtues and vices?"

Digby Scarlett smiled grimly. This woman, whose secret was no secret to him, wrung from him a reluctant admiration. He had been right when he had said she would show fight.

"Perhaps that may be so, Lady Maitland," he answered slowly; "but I fancy time has a very great deal to do with our—vengeance!"

She turned slightly from him, and gazed into the log fire with eyes that looked beyond the flames.

"You had some news for me, Mr. Scarlett?" she said, after a pause. "Will you not tell me what it is? My time is limited, and I must not waste it in discussing theories."

"And I do not come to discuss theories!" he retorted, with a scarcely veiled sneer; "unless you consider the existence of a man you thought—or hoped—dead, and whom I saw in London, a theory, Lady Maitland? Personally, I think it rather an awkward fact!"

The delicate pink in her ladyship's cheeks faded just a little, and the scarlet of her lips seemed to have given place to a pale, bloodless hue; but she raised her eyes to her inquisitor with a defiant courage and laughed softly.

"Come, Mr. Scarlett," she said, "why should you and I play with words? We have no time to fence with pretty speeches! After all, I wonder which of us a judge and jury would think the worst of," she went on passionately. "Myself—the half-frenzied girl, who madly sought to bury an ignominious marriage in oblivion; or you—the deliberate liar and perjurer, who sent an innocent man to a living death!

"Ah!" she cried, in a low, hoarse whisper, "that went home, did it, Digby Scarlett? You thought I knew nothing of your diabolical plot to ruin the man you hated? But I had not the courage to speak then. I was only a weak girl, terrified by the whole affair, and eager to get away from it. Now you are here—what is the price of your silence?"

She lay back in her chair, and the lace on her bosom rose and fell quickly with each breath, but the smile on her lips lingered, as though trained to play the part she had forced upon them.

"Well?" she repeated; "your price, Mr. Scarlett! Name it! Don't hesitate! Men like you have always a price!"

The bitter taunt in her words stung him to a retort. The knowledge that she had known of his treachery had been an unexpected slap in the face; it had taken the wind out of the sails of his confidence. Suppose she struck back! But his eyes followed those of the woman in the chair, and he smiled—the boy would hold her tongue!

"My price, *Lady Maitland*," he said, with elaborate politeness, "is very light, in consideration of what it might have been. I wish you to help me in something I have set my heart upon—that is all. The other affair I regard as nothing as compared with what I have to gain by your co-operation."

"Your heart!" she murmured, with a bitter smile; "since when have you acquired such an encumbrance, Mr. Scarlett; and in what way is it within my power to aid you?"

A slow smile came to the man's lips, and a curious light flickered in his eyes, as he replied—

"I wish—nay, I command you—as the price of my silence regarding your bigamous marriage with Sir Trevor Maitland, to help me to gain for my wife the one creature in all the world I would marry—the girl at the lodge, with whom your step-son imagines himself in love—the waif, Ivy Strange!"

Lady Maitland drew a deep breath with astonishment. She had expected anything but this! It was so simple that at first she hardly knew whether to regard it seriously or not. But one look at the calm, set face of the man who had plainly given her his price for silence, told her that he was a man incapable of joking, and what he wanted he meant to get.

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"The waif, Ivy Strange!" she repeated. "Can you know what you are saying, Mr. Scarlett? A girl with no birth—only a pretty face!"

He smiled grimly. "I am perfectly cognisant of all that, Lady Maitland; and I wish you to help me win her—to use your influence with the girl to look upon me as a favourable lover!"

"There is—Jack!" she said curiously. "Am I to persuade him to give her up?"

He snapped his fingers scornfully. "Leave him to me. I wish you to deal with the girl."

She closed her eyes, and for a moment looked swiftly at the bearing this new departure would have upon her own immediate affairs. Suddenly she smiled, and rose from her chair with a languid grace.

"I think you may leave that to me, Mr. Scarlett. It will not be my fault if I fail in bringing the girl to a reasonable frame of mind——"

"Fail!" he said quickly. "That is what you must not do! I expect success from you; or——" Their eyes met in a swift challenge.

"Exactly, Mr. Scarlett," she murmured. "I shall not fail you."

As he walked across to the "Rest" Digby Scarlett laughed noiselessly. "She will help me. Then, when she knows! I shall indeed have my cup overflowing."

Lady Maitland also laughed when her visitor had left her. "That was a capital idea of mine!" she murmured. "For a larger sum of money that creature will swear anything; and with the girl's quixotic sense of honour she would rather die than let Jack marry her with a stain on her name. Yes, I shall buy this silence very cheaply!"

* * * * * *

It was the half hour before dinner, and Ivy Strange was in Lady Maitland's boudoir listening with a white, frightened face to something her ladyship was saying to her in a low, sweet voice.

"You love Jack, you say, Ivy; then surely love prompts you to sacrifice?"

"Yes, it does, Lady Maitland," the girl answered in a pained voice, "but not to such a sacrifice as selling myself into a loveless marriage!"

"Loveless marriage!" said Lady Maitland, with a faint sneer; "surely a girl in your ambiguous position ought to feel honoured that she should be deemed worthy the notice of such a man as Digby Scarlett."

"Perhaps you are right," the girl murmured, flushing hotly; "but I can only repeat that I can never under any possibilities marry Mr. Scarlett. I fear him! He is a bad man; I feel sure of it; something tells me so."

"And yet," continued the low, even voice, "he saved you from possible harm some time ago at the hand of a—beggar."

"Yes, yes," Ivy cried eagerly, "and I was grateful to him for that; that man frightened me. But since then Mr. Scarlett has persecuted me, and made me regret having accepted a kindness from him."

She spoke passionately, and her usually shy manner had departed, giving way to a new, proud bearing that puzzled Lady Maitland.

"Take my advice," she said coldly, "and try to like the man who has set his heart upon you. There is another reason," she went on quickly, "why you should make this sacrifice. You would not care to drag Jack down into his father's bad books, which would most certainly happen if he married you, for—I know the secret of your—birth!"

She had spoken slowly, watching the girl between half-closed eyes, noting each wave and ebb of colour in the pale face.

"You—know!" gasped the girl. "Then tell me—in pity's name—tell me the worst, Lady Maitland. What is it that can be so disgraceful as to separate me from my lover?"

Lady Maitland drew back coldly from the girl's feverish clutch.

"I think the best person to tell you of your parentage," she went on thoughtfully, "is the man you will have to regard with a daughter's love—a daughter's filial obedience. He will tell you all. But I warn you," she went on, "that what you will be told will raise a barrier between you and the heir of Maitland Manor, and you should be thankful that another man, equally good looking, rich and well born, still waits to win you."

"My father! My father!" murmured the girl, clasping and unclasping her hands; "oh, Lady Maitland! tell me—how you knew this!"

"I promised to tell you nothing, Ivy. I have known a short time only. Now," she said, turning the conversation into another channel, "I wish you to take this envelope to—to the man you met before. Don't be afraid; he will not frighten you again!" she added hastily, seeing a look of terror cross the girl's face; "and also take this letter to him; tell him he is to read it, then destroy it immediately. Remember, he is to destroy it immediately," she reiterated impressively; "don't forget!"

The girl took the letters silently, and, bowing her head, left the room. She was consumed with a burning desire to hear the worst about herself, and even the fact that she was—as she fondly imagined — helping to stop the mouth of an importunate creditor of her lover, Jack, did not keep her mind from dwelling on the secret she must alone hear from her father's lips. But when! But where!

In the spinny all was dark and sinister, and a solitary figure, strolling to and fro, with stealthy steps, muttered an oath as the distant church clock struck ten.

Suddenly there was a slight rustle, as of a woman's gown turning over the twigs and dead leaves on the ground, and a slim, girlish shape approached the waiting man.

"Sent you agen, 'as she!" he muttered savagely. "She's fond of shielding 'erself behind others. Well," he whispered cautiously, "so it's you, young miss, is it? Oh, you needn't look skeered. I've too much to think of to take adwantage of yer sweetheart's knockin' me down! Wot 'ave yer got for me?"

The girl held out two letters silently.

"Two!" exclaimed the man, "wot's that for?"

"This one I was told to say was to be read now," she replied dully; "then you were to destroy it immediately before me."

The man looked at her, but could not decide whether she was playing a joke upon him or not.

"Read it!" he retorted with a coarse laugh. "That's not easy, young Miss, seein' as 'ow there's no bloomin' moon out, and they 'aven't thought of lightin' the spinny with electric light yet! But I'll strike a match, if you'll 'old me 'at for a minit and read this precious dockyment!"

With unwilling fingers the girl held the battered remnant of a hat, while the man opened the letter, then struck a match from a tin box he drew out of his pocket.

Slowly and with difficulty he went once, twice, thrice, over the few brief words under the flickering light of three matches. Then, with grave deliberation he tore the letter into several pieces, and, after satisfying himself as to the contents of the other envelope, he turned to the silent girl before him.

"Well, my girl," he said, with an ugly leer; "ain't yer goin' to say nuffin' to me afore yer go?"

She drew back coldly.

"Good-night," she said, then turned to go; but he caught her by the sleeve and laughed mockingly.

"Is that all—Ivy, my lass. After all these years, 'ave yer no kinder word for me than that! Me that's sought yer and only found yer when yer 'eart's turned agen me by yer 'igh and mighty friends!"

"What do you mean?" she said in a hoarse whisper. "Why do you speak to me like that? Who are you? Speak!"

The man lurched forward. "Come and kiss me, my girl," he whispered. "I'm the man that's been 'unting for yer all these years!"

"Your name!" she cried, recoiling; "your name, first!"

"My name?" he laughed. "It's Mike Holland—ex-convict and—yer lovin' father!"

(Another long instalment next week.)

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A Correction.

HE: "I suppose you find a great many dull people here?" She: "On the contrary, it is the dull people who always find me."

The Landlord Had Been.

"YOU seem to be much put out," said the maiden. "I am indeed," replied the poet. "My landlord called for the rent this morning—and I hadn't got it."

Not the Only Way.

HE: "I do believe that some women go on the stage solely for the pleasure of taking a new name." She: "I—ah—there must be an easier way than that!"

Not Quite the Same.

"THEN you regard marriage as a civil contract?" asked the Sweet Young Thing. "No," answered the Savage Bachelor. "It's rather a contraction of civility."

Different Kinds of Choice.

"SHE says she has remained single from choice." "That's right. I wouldn't undertake to say whose choice it was, but the broad, general statement is unquestionably true."

A Tie, Anyhow.

"It's all foolishness to talk about anyone getting the worst of it in the matrimonial game," declared the big man with a silk hat. "How's that?" "Marriage is always a tie."

They were Society People!

"THAT elopement in high life was so romantic. They stole out——" "No, no, you mustn't say that; they belong to the best society. You should say, 'They kleptomaniacked.'"

Better Change the Line.

AMATEUR POET: "How's this line of my 'Ode to My Sweetheart'?—'Thy bright eyes outrival twin diamonds!'" His Sister: "Make it 'Thy rivals shall eye thy twin diamonds,' and she's yours for ever."

No Need to Worry.

NANETTE: "Ah, but beauty is only skin deep, after all. How do I know that the man I marry will not become cold when I begin to fade?" Gladys: "Oh, don't worry about that. The man who marries you will banish beauty from his consideration at the start."

Not Lasting Love.

"WHEN we were married," sobbed the young wife, "he said he loved me with a love more enduring than the everlasting granite!" "And it didn't last?" queried the sympathising friend. "Last!" echoed the young wife, drying her tears. "It didn't last as long as an asphalt pavement!"

Didn't Matter About Ancestors.

HE: "It is so good of you, darling, to accept me. But even my great wealth, I am afraid, can't make you forget that my grandfather was a common fisherman." She: "Why need I forget it? I will tell everybody about your ancestral hauls, and on your income we will be as happy as the day is long."

Indulgent to Whom?

"KATHARINE, you will always find me an indulgent husband." "Do you mean indulgent to me or indulgent to yourself?"

Idle *versus* Curious.

"MEN," said the Girl, "have as much idle curiosity as women." "More," said the Bachelor. "Women's curiosity is always active."

Unkind in the Extreme.

MISS DE VERE: "Ours is a very old family, Mr. Bloo." Mr. Bloo: "So I perceive. Have you no brothers or sisters younger than yourself?"

Her Assumed Name.

HE: "She is living under an assumed name." She: "Horrible! What is it?" He: "The one she assumed immediately after her husband married her."

Great Improvements.

"WHEN your wife was a young girl she used to paint still-life pictures prettily. Has she improved in her accomplishments since?" "Indeed she has! She can now cook all the things she used to paint."

In Another Country.

"I'M so happy," she said. "Ever since my engagement to Charlie the whole world seems different. I do not seem to be in dull, prosaic London, but in——" "Lapland," suggested the small brother.

How She Recognised Him.

IT was at a masquerade ball, and she recognised him at once. "How did you come to recognise me, darling? Was it the loud beating of my heart that gave me away?" "Oh, no," she replied, "it was your bow legs."

He Comforted Her.

"Do you know, Paul," said Ethel trembling, "I sometimes fear that you don't love me any more." "Right you are," said Paul, embracing her. "I couldn't." And Ethel heaved a sigh and settled down contentedly.

Children Not Wanted.

THE DEAR GIRL: "I am really astonished to hear you advance the proposition that a child should not be corrected in the presence of strangers." The Savage Bachelor: "He should not be, because he should never be in the presence of strangers; that's why."

He'd Learnt a Lesson.

"DON'T you think," said the pensive girl, "that people make mistakes by acting on generous impulses?" "Yes," answered the smooth-shaven man, "I acted on generous impulses for nearly two months once. Now, if I don't get paid on salary day I don't act."

The Infallible Cure.

A WOMAN cured her husband of staying out late at night by going to the door when he came home, and whispering through the keyhole, "Is that you, Willie?" Her husband's name is John, and he stays at home every night now, and sleeps with one eye open, and a revolver under his pillow.

Why Men are Distrustful.

"I WONDER why it is that so many men of talents become sour and distrustful of their fellow creatures?" mused the young woman. "I suppose," replied Miss Cayenne, "it's because they are constantly subjected to such emotional extremes. They can never tell whether a caller is an autograph-collector or a bill-collector."

Too Much Consideration for Her.

"YOU did not go to the chemist as I requested you?" Beryl Montague's voice rang out clear and cold. As for Mr. Montague, her husband, he drew himself up to his full height. "No!" he answered haughtily. "Have I not given my word that I never would do anything to bring the blush to your cheek? Telegraph for your complexion and tell the chemist to send it up!"

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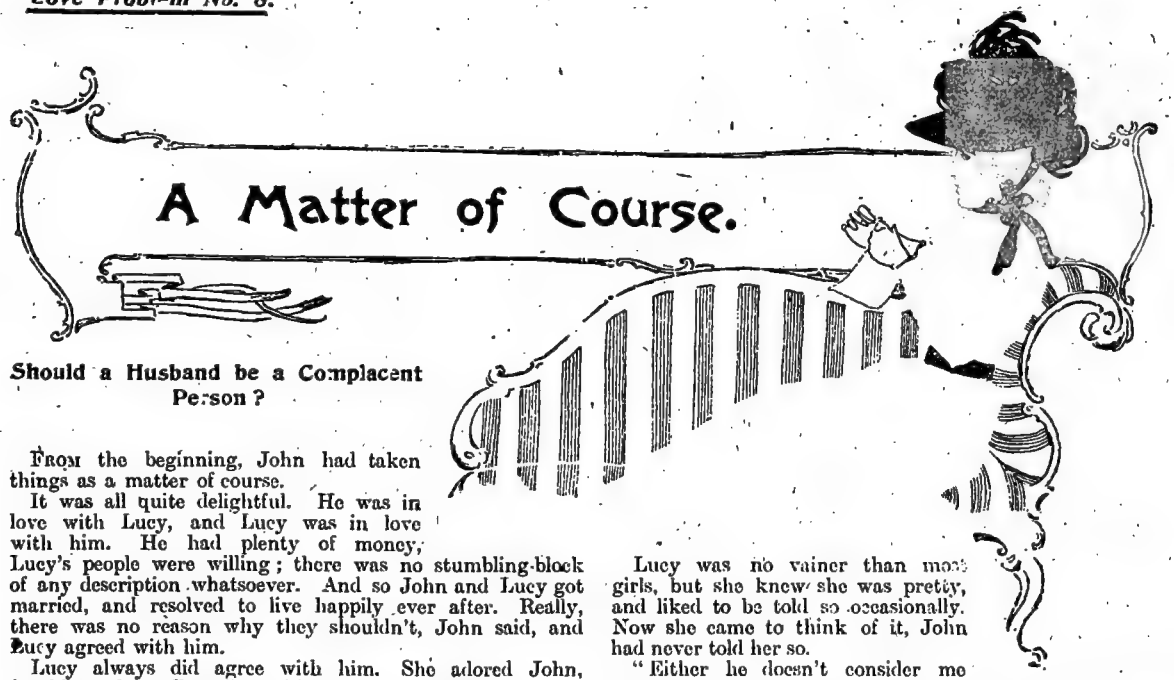
Love Problem No. 8.

A Matter of Course.



Should a Husband be a Complacent Person?

From the beginning, John had taken things as a matter of course.

It was all quite delightful. He was in love with Lucy, and Lucy was in love with him. He had plenty of money, Lucy's people were willing; there was no stumbling-block of any description whatsoever. And so John and Lucy got married, and resolved to live happily ever after. Really, there was no reason why they shouldn't, John said, and Lucy agreed with him.

Lucy always did agree with him. She adored John, frankly and unaffectedly—which was most unwise of her, of course. John was a nice man, but he was only a man. He took the gifts the gods sent him quite as a matter of course.

He was well-to-do, and his business in the City prospered, as a matter of course.

Lucy loved him, as a matter of course. She was always bright, and cheerful, and affectionate, as a matter of course. She obeyed him in everything, as a matter of course.

She dressed in the way that pleased him best, she read the books he selected for her, she sang the songs he chose, she saw the plays he approved of, she entertained his friends, and dropped certain friends of her own whom he had said he didn't care for—all quite as a matter of course.

It never occurred to John that a wife may have wishes and interests apart from her husband's; that there may be something in the nature of a sacrifice in her complete dependence upon her husband's will, something which called for more than mere acceptance as his rightful due.

To do John justice, he was by no means indifferent to Lucy's charming qualities. He had simply got used to them, just as he had got used to an excellent dinner. He enjoyed both, and accepted both as a matter of course.

At first Lucy was too wrapped up in the joy and dignity of her new position and in her admiration for John, to notice anything amiss. But, by degrees, she began to notice things.

For instance.

"I'm going to bring a friend home to dinner to-night, darling," remarked John one morning at breakfast.

"To-night!" exclaimed Lucy. "Why, don't you remember, dear, mother has a box for the Lyceum, and you arranged to take me?"

"By Jove, I'd forgotten all about it! What a nuisance! I can't put Desmond off."

"Then we must give up the Lyceum, I suppose."

"I'm afraid so. I'll wire to mother on my way to the office. I daresay she can take Max and Kitty."

"Not a word that he's sorry, or—or anything," reflected Lucy. And, for the first time since their marriage, she felt a little sorry for herself.

From that day, John's habit of taking things as a matter of course gradually began to dawn upon Lucy.

Lucy was no vainer than most girls, but she knew she was pretty, and liked to be told so occasionally. Now she came to think of it, John had never told her so.

"Either he doesn't consider me pretty, or else he takes it as a matter of course," said Lucy to herself. "In either case, it's rather hard."

She found it rather hard, too, that all her pretty frocks made apparently no impression upon John.

In the early days of their engagement, John had expressed certain arbitrary views on the subject of woman's dress, and ever since then, Lucy had taken infinite pains to please him, even to the sacrifice of certain pet weaknesses of her own. And to all this, John apparently was blind. He found no fault, but neither did he dole out a single word of praise.

Now, a pretty woman likes to be complimented upon her dress even more than upon her looks, and Lucy, being no exception to the rule, began to pine for some positive sign of John's approval.

Now she came to think of it, he had never even told her that he loved her—at least, not in so many words.

"Every woman wants to be told in so many words," said Lucy.

By this time, the vague sense of injustice under which she had been smarting, half-unconsciously at first, had taken definite shape. She felt she had a grievance against John—a good, substantial grievance.

"He takes everything for granted," said Lucy to herself. And then it suddenly occurred to her that she, too, was taking things for granted.

"How do I know he really loves me, since he's never said so?"

"How do I know he cares what I wear, or how I look, or whether I'm fond of him or not? How do I know he isn't *indifferent*, and not merely thoughtless?"

The wretched suspicion, once conceived, haunted Lucy day and night. She thought of it so persistently that doubt at last seemed to be certainty, and finally—well, finally John began to notice a change in Lucy's manner.

All her pretty, affectionate little ways disappeared one by one. Frigid politeness took their place.

John had got used to being petted and caressed by Lucy. He was wont to look upon these endearments with a sort of happy complacency that suggested no corresponding obligations on his part. When Lucy put her arms about his neck, and laid her cheek against his, he would respond readily

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enough, but it never occurred to him to take the initiative—he was so confident of Lucy; dear, demonstrative, impulsive Lucy.

When Lucy's little ways dropped from her, one by one, John felt at first surprised, then hurt, and finally alarmed. By slow and painful degrees he was forced to realise the fact that Lucy was growing cold towards him.

Most things endear themselves by virtue to their rarity, and kisses are no exception. To John, Lucy's kisses became desperately dear. At the end of a week, they had become priceless.

Other and less tangible proofs of Lucy's affection rose in value by precisely similar methods.

One day Lucy appeared at breakfast attired in a morning gown of pink muslin. Now, pink was a colour which John abominated. He could not have explained his aversion, but there it was, and Lucy knew it. She had a weakness for pink herself, because it suited her fair, fluffy hair, and dainty complexion, but to please John she had discarded the colour since her marriage—not without secret heart-burnings.

John stared at the pink muslin in displeased surprise.

"Whatever made you put on that thing, darling?" he demanded, a trifle irritably.

"What thing do you mean?" asked Lucy, in a tone of cool indifference.

John was not used to that tone from her. Somehow, it disconcerted him.

"Your frock," he murmured.

"What is the matter with my frock?"

"It's—it's pink, you know," he explained, almost meekly.

"Well?" said Lucy.

Her manner suggested polite inquiry.

This was too much for John.

"You know I hate pink!" he blurted out.

"Do you? I had forgotten. I'm sorry you don't like it, though, because I've decided upon pink for my new evening dress. It's my favourite colour, you know."

And Lucy calmly went on with her breakfast.

John was too taken aback to reply. He was so unaccustomed to this attitude on Lucy's part that he really didn't know how to meet it. Lucy, who had always shown the most touching regard for his slightest wish, what had come over her? It had never occurred to John, be it said, to describe this regard of Lucy's as "touching" until he had occasion to miss it. In fact, he had hardly been aware of its existence.

But the incident of the pink frock paved the way for a succession of small encounters of a similar nature between John and Lucy, in which the latter, by dint of a certain calm assumption of superiority, invariably had her own way.

And now John realised clearly what a gentle, affectionate, obedient little wife Lucy had been in the old days, before—before what?

What had happened? John asked himself miserably. Why was Lucy changed?

Try as he would, he could not evade the obvious answer—Lucy had ceased to love him.

At first, John fought against the suspicion with desperate indignation; but, as the days went by and Lucy grew colder and more and more distant in her manner, doubt became certainty, and John was forced to acknowledge to himself that his wife no longer cared for him.

And he had been so sure of her! So sure that, well—that the thought of losing her had never entered his mind and consequently——

With a sudden pang of self reproach, John realised the smug complacency with which he had always regarded Lucy's love for him.

"Fool! Presumptuous fool!" cried John.

"Meaning me, sir?"

John's confidential clerk looked up from his work with a somewhat scared expression.

John recovered himself with a start.

"No, Thompson, of course not. I—I was thinking of someone else. What's the time?"

"Ten to five, sir."

"Then I'll catch my early train. Good night, Thompson."

"Good-night, sir."

John had made up his mind. That night he would win or lose all. He would speak with Lucy, tell her everything that was in his mind—he would try to soften the heart she had hardened against him—he would appeal to her womanly pity and implore her to give him back the love he had lost.

He almost ran the half mile that divided his house from the station, and his hand trembled violently as he inserted his key in the latch and pushed open the door.

Everything within was quiet. Lucy did not run to meet him as she would have done once—it seemed so long ago now.

He ran upstairs, hastily changed his clothes, and hurried down to his wife's room. She was not there.

After what seemed an eternity, he heard the sound of the dinner gong. He wandered into the dining-room. Dinner was laid for two, as usual, with Clara, the maid, hovering in attendance. Lucy had not yet appeared.

"Where is your mistress?" asked John.

Clara looked surprised.

"She went out about an hour ago, sir, and said she might not be back for dinner."

"Is that all the message she left?"

"Yes, sir."

What did it mean? Lucy had never behaved like this before. To go out, leaving no other message than——

Not once since their marriage had she absented herself in this unaccountable way.

An hour passed—two hours—and still no Lucy came. John took up a book and tried to read. It was a new novel by his favourite author; John thought he had never read anything so dull. He threw down the book in despair, and glanced at his watch—five minutes past ten!

John walked to the window and lifted the blind. He could watch for Lucy from here, for the window commanded the only approach to the house.

He peered out into the dimly-lighted street, but could see nothing. Theirs was a lonely road that led nowhere in particular, and at night only an occasional belated inhabitant would pass their house.

John dropped the blind, and began pacing restlessly up and down the room.

Eleven o'clock came, but no Lucy.

John rang his bell, and Clara appeared in answer to the summons.

"You and cook can go to bed," he told the girl. "I am going to wait up for your mistress."

"Very well, sir, thank you. Good-night, sir."

"Good-night, Clara."

John listened as the maids tramped upstairs past his door to their room at the top of the house. When all was quiet he sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

Presently the clock in a neighbouring church tower began to strike. It was midnight.

John sat up in his chair and listened.

A cab was coming down the street. It stopped just under his window.

John ran down the stairs and flung open the door just as someone stepped out of the cab. It was Lucy.

She pulled out her purse, slowly and deliberately, and handed the cabman a coin. The man touched his hat and drove off.

Not till then did Lucy appear to notice John's presence.

She raised her eyebrows with an affectation of surprise.

"Oh, are you still up?" she remarked.

"Lucy, I have been mad with anxiety about you."

"That was scarcely necessary."

"Lucy, I don't understand; why did you leave that message? Where have you been?"

"My dear John, why all this excitement? And do you intend to stay out here all night?"

Without waiting for answer, she turned and walked into the house. He followed her in silence.

She flung off her wraps, and stood revealed in a dazzling garment of pink satin. He winced involuntarily as he saw the dress.

Lucy faced him tranquilly.

"I'm sorry you waited up for me," she said. "Really there was no need."

"No need! Lucy, where have you been?"

"I don't think it would interest you to know. Besides, I prefer not to tell you."

"Lucy!"

"Well?"

"What does this mean?"

Lucy stood tapping the carpet impatiently with one small foot.

"For Heaven's sake, don't adopt that tragic tone," she said. "It makes me tired."

Lucy had picked up the Americanism somewhere before her marriage, but had dropped it immediately afterwards at John's request. John hated Americanisms.

"Lucy, what does this mean?" said John, with a pale face.

For an instant Lucy hesitated. Then she laughed a hard little laugh.

"I don't choose to explain," she said, "and I wish you'd leave me alone. I'm tired."

John did not fly into a passion as she had expected. Without another word he turned away and left her. She heard him go upstairs to his own room and close the door. Then all was silent.

For several minutes Lucy remained motionless. Then she gathered up her satin gown, turned out the light, and stole noiselessly upstairs.

Softly she opened the door of her husband's room.

"John!" she whispered. "John!"

There was no answer. The room was in darkness.

She groped her way along the wall and switched on the light. John was sitting at his desk, his head resting upon his arms.

She came up behind him and touched him gently.

He started at the touch, and raised his head.

"John!" she whispered. "John! Do you really care so much?" And with a little sob she threw her arms about his neck and pressed her warm red lips against his white cheek.

"I do love you, John. I was only pretending—I thought you didn't care, and I wanted to punish you, and—and to find out whether you really did care—and—and I didn't think you did, and—and—oh, John, I've been so miserable!"

"Dear little girl, what put that idea into your head? There's not another man in the world who loves his wife as I love you."

"John! You never told me that before."

"Haven't I? Why, Lucy, Lucy, my darling, surely you knew—surely I've——"

"John, you've never said so. There are—there are heaps of things you've never said."

"And so you've been fretting. Poor little woman, I'm beginning to understand. What a thoughtless brute I've been. I—I've been taking things for granted, sweetheart. You've spoilt me. You've been too good to me. I've been an ungrateful scoundrel, Lucy, I see that now."

"But—but you loved me all the time?" asked Lucy, wistfully.

"My darling! Of course I did."

Lucy laid her soft cheek against his.

"You never told me. Women—like—to be told things," she said softly.

Grete Hahn.

MRS. WIGBALD: "No, my husband hasn't done much for twenty-five years." Mrs. Oldbrain: "Has he been an invalid all that time?" Mrs. Wigbald: "No, he's been a Government employé."

HOLLOWAY'S PILLS

THE FAMOUS HOUSEHOLD REMEDIES.

THE PILLS

have gained their wonderful reputation by sheer force of merit, because every person who uses them recommends them to others. They have positively no equal for thoroughly cleansing the system and putting the liver and kidneys in functional order, without pain or griping. They are the best known remedy for Indigestion, Biliousness, Headache, Dizziness, and the common condition of ill-health, known as "run-down" or "out of sorts." Females of every age find Holloway's Pills an invaluable remedy and aid.

THE OINTMENT

is known throughout the world as positively the best and quickest remedy for Bad Legs, Old Wounds and Sores, and Skin Eruptions of every kind, and should be used in conjunction with the Pills. It is also the speediest remedy for Rheumatism, Lumbago, Pains and Stiffness in the Limbs and Joints, Backache, &c. For pains and Soreness at the Chest, and for Throat and Lung Complaints arising from Cold or Weakness, Holloway's Ointment affords most welcome relief in a very short time.

A COMPLETE DISPENSARY IN THEMSELVES.

AND OINTMENT

Splendid Series.

Alice bounded in unceremoniously. "Here I am at last," she announced.

Mrs. Lyndsey's - - - - - - Daughter.

Being the last of six stories told in the Brighton Express and now related

BY

WINIFRED GRAHAM.

"I suppose you are expecting my story to-night?" said Carter, as the six friends settled themselves comfortably in the carriage. "Well, I won't disappoint you; so here goes!"

"She was altogether charming. 'Mrs. Lyndsey? Oh, yes,' people would say when you mentioned her name; 'everyone knows her, and she is a very old friend of mine.'

"Each fresh acquaintance became a 'very old friend' in the course of a few weeks. They would quite forget the fact of their recent introduction to the fair widow.

"Though the bloom of youth had passed, there was still the attraction left of an elegant figure, handsome features, and burnished gold hair, bronzed by the sun of eight-and-thirty summers, which had glided lightly over Mrs. Lyndsey's head.

"She was one of those energetic and lively individuals who never rest. Wherever she went the widow entertained. She loved to gather her fellow-creatures round her, to be the centre of an admiring circle, to display her gifts as hostess. She knew exactly what everybody liked—who should meet who, and how to amuse them. It was always 'Liberty Hall' at Mrs. Lyndsey's. So many people invite their friends only to make them feel as if at school again, their pleasures being mapped out, while they are dictated to, and made to drive, ride, play golf, eat, drink, and smoke at stated hours. Dinner was the only immovable feast in the widow's establishment. You could breakfast, lunch, and tea when and where you pleased.

"Music was Mrs. Lyndsey's ruling passion. She took immense interest in it, from the fact that her family had all been great singers, while she could not produce a note in tune. She felt it her duty to compensate for this deficiency by becoming the patron of talented Nobodies, and bringing them to the front by her influence and power.

"Her latest discovery was a baritone, Bertrand Annesley, whose beautiful voice had first been heard at a large evening reception at her town house. It was given for his benefit, Mrs. Lyndsey having made up her mind to bring him to the fore. Society declared him a success, and since then he had become the fashion.

"He was a slim man with dark hair, deep-set blue eyes, clear-cut features, and straight, white teeth, which were displayed to advantage. I have heard them called aggressive teeth, since the singer always appeared to be showing them to you. He had a particularly fascinating manner, which alone should have made his way in the world of fashion. He was never humble, never proud, yet he always made you feel as if he were in want of some particular knowledge that you alone could supply.

"He was the only man I, for one, have ever met who could condole or congratulate without appearing at a disadvantage.

"'I adore "Buzz,"' Mrs. Lyndsey would say jokingly, since that was the nickname she had chosen to give Bertrand Annesley. 'It is so satisfactory to introduce a singer that everybody falls down to worship. I was his fairy godmother, you know. I call him my son.'

"This was a cloak with which she sought to conceal the open way in which she flirted with the young singer. It flattered her vanity that he should pose as her property.

"Directly the Goodwood week was over, Mrs. Lyndsey enlivened a country neighbourhood by descending upon it with a troop of London friends, and giving a series of garden parties.

"'I cannot think why the very word "garden" on an invitation card should instil the idea of boredom and insipidness to the average mind,' said Mrs. Lyndsey, looking up at Buzz. 'I pause before penning the word,' biting the tip of her quill doubtfully. 'It means those everlasting greenhouses, which the people *will* file through from a sense of duty, and pretend to admire the grapes.'

"'Yes; it is rather deadly.'

"'And the men won't come, Buzz. You cannot possibly talk to more than six girls at a time, while there are sure to be sixty.'

"It certainly sounded hopeless; Mr. Annesley looked perplexed.

"'But the local people will feel horribly defrauded if I don't give my dull afternoons.'

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"'Why not try the effect of an evening garden party? These hot summer nights are made for it. Illuminate your grounds, and have singers on the lake. Voices sound enchanting across the water. You might get some really good professionals down for the occasion. Put them on a raft ablaze with red torches and coloured lights, and you will send all true lovers of music mad with joy.'

"'What beautiful ideas you have, Buzz! Think how romantic it will be!' cried Mrs. Lyndsey, her eyes sparkling with delight. 'Of course you will sing, though you had promised yourself a rest after the season. I could not attempt it without you as the "star." We must do the thing thoroughly well; but first of all I shall have to consult dear Mr. Bodkin; he is so dreadfully hurt if I get up anything without telling him.'

"'Who is Mr. Bodkin?' asked Buzz—the widow thought a trifle quickly.

"'Oh! don't you know? He is our fat old Squire; the best-hearted creature in the world. I make him my confidant in everything; he is so easily pleased and interested!'

"'Does Mrs. Bodkin share the confidence?'

"'How silly you are, Buzz! There is no Mrs. Bodkin. That's one of the dear Squire's most praiseworthy merits.'

"'He will be an acquisition, then, among the sixty girls, being a bachelor and well off.'

"'I am afraid I kindle the flame of jealousy in the heart of many a worthy village spinster. They tell me he is very solemn and morose when I desert the Hall—that he only waxes jocular once a year. As if I only saw him when I am here!'

"'Poor Mr. Bodkin, do not break his heart,' said Buzz compassionately.

"Mrs. Lyndsey rested her chin between her hands, put her elbows on the table, and, leaning forward, looked straight into Bernard Annesley's eyes.

"'Do you think I could?'

"'Why not?'

"'I am old.'

"He laughed.

"'Only the young can afford to say that,' he replied.

"'What night shall we have the party?' she said abruptly, changing the subject.

"'Friday week?'

"'No, an unlucky day.'

"'Surely you are not superstitious?'

"'Of course not, only dear Mr. Bodkin never fixes anything on Friday. He has some very strange practices and customs. Besides, if we put it off till Monday, Alice will be back. She'll enjoy it, you know. You have never seen my little girl, Buzz.'

"'It is a pleasure to come.'

"'She has been at a school in Germany—such a sweet child!'

"Mr. Annesley expected to see a girl of about twelve. To his surprise a beautiful young woman verging on eighteen arrived one evening, dusty and travel-strained, while they were at dinner.

"All Mrs. Lyndsey's guests were Londoners, and their costumes fairly dazzled Alice as she bounded in unceremoniously.

"'Here I am at last,' she announced, flinging back a long cloak and unwinding her veil. 'How do you do, everybody? How nice and clean you all look!'

"She crumpled her mother's chiffon in a fond embrace, and perched herself on the arm of a chair.

"'I've had an awful journey, darling,' she said, addressing Mrs. Lyndsey. 'Mariana, my maid, groaned all the time on the boat, though it was as calm as a lake. I believe she thought it was the right thing to do. I ran across some Americans I met in Paris fortunately, so they kept me company.'

"'In Paris, my dear! When were you there?' asked her mother wonderingly.

"'Don't you remember, Fraulein Wieder took me at

(*Continued overleaf.*)

DYSPEPTICS.

Nervous, debilitated, half-dead people will gain new life, energy and strength from Mother Seigel's Syrup, because it does the only thing which can give permanent relief—helps you to digest your food. Food is a strength-maker and health-maker, but it must be digested. Discomfort after meals, pains in the chest and shoulders, headaches, palpitation, flatulence, loss of appetite, broken sleep, constant weariness of mind and body, these are sure signs of indigestion.

SEIGEL'S SYRUP

The unfailing success of Mother Seigel's Syrup in curing all these weakening and distressing symptoms of imperfect digestion lies in the power of the root and herb extracts, of which it is composed, to regulate and tone the stomach, liver and kidneys. When they are clogged with the decayed products of indigestion, it clears them of their noxious load. When weak, it gives them tone and vitality, makes them equal to their work. Then food eaten with a relish and digested as a perfect mill grinds grain, makes and keeps your body strong and healthy.

WILL CURE YOU.

"For several years chronic dyspepsia was the curse of my life," says Mr. R. Locke, of 2 King Street, Hammersmith. "After eating I had a feeling of fulness in the chest, a gnawing pain and weight at the stomach and an incessant aching in the shoulder blades. I had little or no appetite and was literally afraid to eat.

SEIGEL'S SYRUP

I felt tired and lifeless, and at times my head was in a whirl with giddiness. Biliousness and constipation no doubt were the cause of this. Doctors could not cure me, and I was well nigh in despair, when a friend advised me to try Mother Seigel's Syrup. After taking two bottles my appetite improved, and I could digest what I ate. Eight bottles completed the cure, and though seven years have gone by since then I have never again had an attack of indigestion."

CURES CONSTIPATION.

Easter for a week? You paid for it, anyway—the bill was enormous. Fraulein got all her summer things out of it.'

"'Oh, Alice!' exclaimed Mrs. Lyndsey with mild reproach.

"'Thank goodness, I am not going back. You will have to let me out now, Mammy, and I shall date you terribly.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey frowned slightly under her auburn fringe, though she smiled to her guests, with a pretty little shrug of her bare shoulders, as much as to say, 'I don't care.'

"'I shall want to be properly introduced when I am clothed decently and in my right mind,' said Alice, slipping off the chair, and throwing her cloak over her arm. 'I am dead beat and ravenous now, but will dine upstairs and tumble into bed, so good-night all. To-morrow you shall make my acquaintance.'

"So saying she walked to the door with an easy, gliding step.

"After dinner Mrs. Lyndsey went up and found Alice lounging in a white dressing-gown after a bath, with the remains of a hot chicken by her side.

"'They sent me up champagne, darling,' she said, 'but you know I drink beer.'

"'*Beer!*' cried Mrs. Lyndsey. 'A girl like you taking *beer?* It does not sound at all nice, and so very bad for the complexion!'

"'That comes of stagnating in Germany,' replied Alice with a smile. 'But I will try and tone down and do you credit. By the way, while we were waiting in London (three hours, you know) I could not sit in a hotel doing nothing, so I went to Madame Lottingdale and ordered some smart frocks. You are not angry, are you? I bought an exquisite pale pink dress for your evening garden-party. I look lovely in it.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey's face fell.

"'I say, you don't mind me looking lovely, Mammy, do you?'

"'What an absurd idea, Alice; only *I* was going to wear pale pink, and we shall be laughed at if we dress alike.'

"'All right. I will wear the blue. I bought it at the same time and it is just as pretty, so don't fret.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey returned to the drawing-room with a sigh. She thoroughly realised at last that she was actually the possessor of a grown-up daughter.

"'If only she could have stayed at school another year,' she thought mournfully. 'Fancy *me* a chaperon!'

"Alice made herself popular at once with her mother's guests—she was so merry and high-spirited. She inherited Mrs. Lyndsey's gift of becoming most intimate immediately with comparative strangers, and making them feel as if they had known her all their life.

"She treated Bertrand Annesley as a sort of elder brother, and very soon adopted the familiar term of 'Buzz,' hitherto reserved for Mrs. Lyndsey only.

"Fate favoured the evening garden-party, a glorious moon beaming on the revellers, and as Alice listened, enthralled, to Bertrand's voice swelling across the water, she thought she had never heard anything so beautiful in all her life.

"When he sprang to the shore from the boat Alice's eyes glowed. She laid her cool fingers in his palm, and spoke from her heart:

"'That was grand,' she said, '*grand!*' And her praise was so genuine that it pleased him well.

"'I wonder what you have in your throat to give you that voice?' she continued, after a pause. 'It comes out like the breath of your soul. I expect you will sing when you die, or if you groan it will be musical.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey moved between them.

"'Buzz, Lady Gallone wants to know you. Alice, my dear, do go and talk to that dreadful Mr. Sowerbutt, or I am sure he will tack on to someone and worry them to death. He is all right if you know his pedigree, who he is, and all about him, but I do hate a man who makes you feel hot when you introduce him.'

"'Sing again, Buzz,' said Alice, as she went away.

"'Buzz!' laughed Mrs. Lyndsey, looking after her daughter's retreating figure. 'You must excuse her, but she's only a schoolgirl still—a mere child.'

"The evening proved an immense success; even Mr. Bodkin said so, and he had prophesied a failure from the first.

"He raised Mrs. Lyndsey's hand to his lips under the shadow of the trees.

"'It is all so like you,' he said, 'utterly beautiful, original, fascinating.'

"She laughed and turned away.

"'Why had he stopped at her hand?' Mr. Bodkin asked himself afterwards.

"'He who hesitates is lost!' and then there was that singing chap, whom idle gossips termed, 'her latest.'

"The word struck terror to his heart.

"Whenever he tried to find her for a moment alone, some aggravating individual always intervened.

"The summer days of outdoor pleasures passed swiftly by, and Mrs. Lyndsey gradually began to ask herself why they were the happiest she had ever spent.

"Involuntarily her eyes turned to Bertrand Annesley as if in answer to the thought.

"How handsome he looked, seated at the piano, his hands straying idly over the keys, his voice singing snatches of song.

"Mrs. Lyndsey was reading in a low window-seat, but the words, and the sense, became jumbled in her mind. She was sure the heroine had just said something brilliant, for she scanned a page that struck her as clever, though a moment later she had forgotten it.

"Finally the book fell idly in her lap. She was tired of epigrams. They were alone in the cool solitude of her boudoir. She picked a rose growing in the window and began plucking off the leaves and rolling them between her finger and thumb.

"Then, glancing out, she saw her friends in the garden, and drew back behind the curtain; it was pleasanter here with Buzz.

"'This is the privilege of great friendship,' he said, speaking as he played. 'To be together in silence and not feel bound to talk.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey ceased rolling the soft velvet leaves, and looked across at Bertrand Annesley. She leant her head against the panel and smiled languidly.

"'Of *great* friendship,' she repeated, as if the words were sweet.

"'I hope,' murmured the man, and he touched the keys so softly that his music sounded faint and far away, 'that it may be always so, through all the years that are beyond. I seem to picture them stretching out before us, bright and beautiful, unchanging save for the uniting of a closer bond.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey's heart began to flutter; she caught her breath. A faint pink stole into her cheeks. The melody seemed surging in her ears; it breathed of love, of life—life as she had never known it. She remembered her wedding day with the rich man who had been so kind always and considerate.

"'He was very nice,' Mrs. Lyndsey would say, if questioned about her first husband.

"Now she began to feel the want of a companion—a man who would be her right hand in everything. Buzz was always ready to suggest and advise, she could rely on him to do her every wish, to help, to entertain, to banish *ennui*, to soothe a fretful mood.

"'I don't know how I shall tear myself away,' he said, as if reading her thoughts.

"'But you will not leave us yet? I should be quite lost here in the country without you.'

"'How good of you to say that. I only wish I could believe it.'

"'Buzz, do you doubt my word? Should I favour *you* with Society lies?'

"'Why not? They are very graceful things, made for pretty lips.'

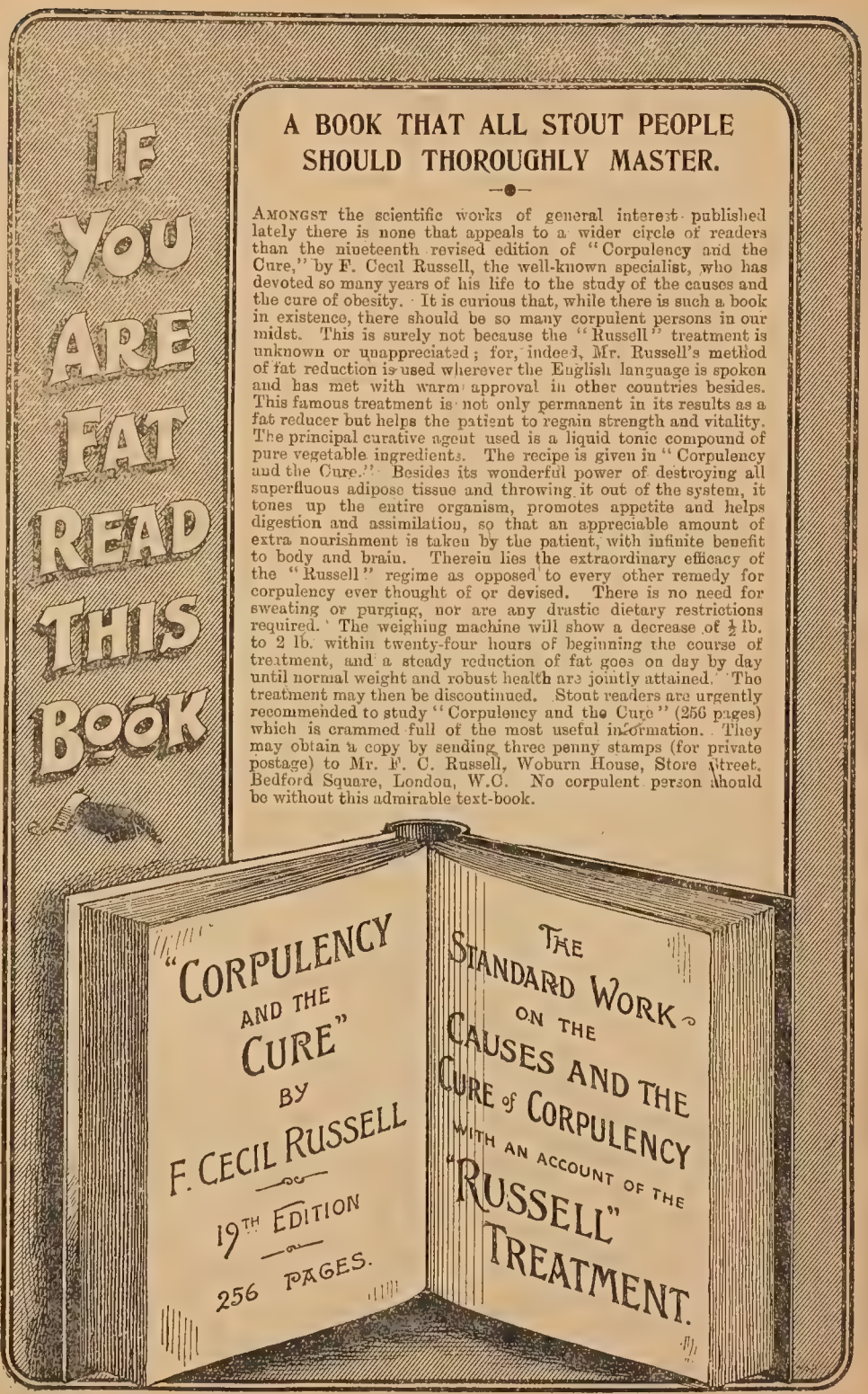
"Mrs. Lyndsey tapped her foot on the soft carpet a trifle impatiently.

"'It is thanks to you,' said Bertrand, 'that I am what I am. You "made" me, Mrs. Lyndsey—there is no other word. I am now, through your kind help, a rich man.

(*Concluded on page* 830.)

A HINT TO STOUT LADIES.

LADIES are constantly complaining that they cannot retain their youthfulness of figure without either taking vigorous exercise in the gymnasium, wearing strongly boned and tightly-laced corsets, or going in for a course of semi-starvation, to all of which they feel there are the strongest objections And it is well that these objections are heeded, for all such drastic and exhausting methods of overcoming obesity, or of checking its approach, are weakening and debilitating in the extreme, and if persevered in, may leave lasting evil effects upon the system. Very different indeed is the simple and healthful method of *permanently* reducing a too rotund figure to beautiful proportions known as the "Russell" treatment. By means of this wonderful system the first day's reduction amounts to from ½ lb. to 2lb., and this decrease continues daily in the same ratio until normal size and weight are attained. The fullest particulars of the system are set forth by the originator, Mr. F. Cecil Russell, in his admirable book entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," which he will be pleased to send to any applicant who sends him her address and three penny stamps. For the benefit of our stout friends we append Mr. Russell's address: Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.—Reprinted from the *Penny Illustrated Paper.*


IF YOU ARE FAT READ THIS BOOK
A BOOK THAT ALL STOUT PEOPLE SHOULD THOROUGHLY MASTER.
AMONGST the scientific works of general interest published lately there is none that appeals to a wider circle of readers than the nineteenth revised edition of "Corpulency and the Cure," by F. Cecil Russell, the well-known specialist, who has devoted so many years of his life to the study of the causes and the cure of obesity. It is curious that, while there is such a book in existence, there should be so many corpulent persons in our midst. This is surely not because the "Russell" treatment is unknown or unappreciated; for, indeed, Mr. Russell's method of fat reduction is used wherever the English language is spoken and has met with warm approval in other countries besides. This famous treatment is not only permanent in its results as a fat reducer but helps the patient to regain strength and vitality. The principal curative agent used is a liquid tonic compound of pure vegetable ingredients. The recipe is given in "Corpulency and the Cure." Besides its wonderful power of destroying all superfluous adipose tissue and throwing it out of the system, it tones up the entire organism, promotes appetite and helps digestion and assimilation, so that an appreciable amount of extra nourishment is taken by the patient, with infinite benefit to body and brain. Therein lies the extraordinary efficacy of the "Russell" regime as opposed to every other remedy for corpulency ever thought of or devised. There is no need for sweating or purging, nor are any drastic dietary restrictions required. The weighing machine will show a decrease of ½ lb. to 2 lb. within twenty-four hours of beginning the course of treatment, and a steady reduction of fat goes on day by day until normal weight and robust health are jointly attained. The treatment may then be discontinued. Stout readers are urgently recommended to study "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pages) which is crammed full of the most useful information. They may obtain a copy by sending three penny stamps (for private postage) to Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. No corpulent person should be without this admirable text-book.
"CORPULENCY AND THE CURE" BY F. CECIL RUSSELL
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THE STANDARD WORK ON THE CAUSES AND THE CURE OF CORPULENCY WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE "RUSSELL" TREATMENT.

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You see our ideas of wealth are slightly different, yet I consider myself at least sufficiently well off to think of marriage. Lately, I have been deeply, seriously, considering the subject—for love, Mrs. Lyndsey, cannot be lightly put aside.'

"His eyes grew bright with passion; he ceased playing.

"'You said,' he continued, changing his tone to one of intreaty, 'that you and your daughter would come and stay with me when your visitors leave. I should be so proud to return, in ever so slight a measure, your hospitality. By conferring this favour on me you will——'

"But Mrs. Lyndsey interrupted him.

"'I did not know that you had taken it seriously, Buzz. I only spoke in jest. You know I should enjoy to come above all things, and for a moment I was tempted. But——'

"'But what?'

"'Well, come here, and I will tell you.'

"He crossed the room and seated himself beside her.

"'You see, Buzz dear, people talk so dreadfully; the world is not kind to lonely women. If you were a relation it would be different; but, after all, we are nothing to each other.'

"'Would you let me be something, then?' he asked, his face paling with sudden anxiety—'a relation, for instance? I have longed to tell you the secret of my heart, but at last I believe you guess it—you know and understand. Till now I have not had the courage to speak to you. I never realised before I came here what it was to love, and then I was appalled at the thought of my own unworthiness—till I saw that my passion was returned—I——'

"He seized her hand, and as he did so the door opened, and Alice, radiant, breathless, entered the room.

"She had a tennis racket in her hand, which she flung on the sofa.

"'I have won the tournament—congratulate me, Buzz!'

"'Well done! How clever you are!' Mrs. Lyndsey's cheeks were aflame, her eyes gleamed in an odd, excited way, while her fingers nervously tore the roses, and let their crushed leaves fall scattered on the window-seat. Her heart swelled with pride and joy as she gazed tenderly at Buzz. The sweet truth had been revealed at last—he loved her! he loved her! Oh, why had Alice come so inopportunely, as the words trembled on his lips. She was always obtruding her personality when least wanted, contrasting her young freshness with matured bloom.

"'What are you two doing?' asked Alice, with a look at Bertrand that Mrs. Lyndsey could not understand. Was it possible that the girl was in the habit of vulgarly chaffing him about his devotion to her mother?

"'Oh!' as if suddenly remembering something, 'I met Mr. Bodkin—he was trying a new horse, *such* a beauty! I thought it would kick his dog-cart to pieces. He gave me this letter for you, mamma—said it was *very* important, and you were to read it at once—alone!"

"Mr. Annesley took the hint, for Alice gave him a look that plainly said: 'Go!'

"As she left the room, Alice went over to the piano, and began to strum.

"'Pray have some consideration for my nerves,' sighed Mrs. Lyndsey, tearing open the envelope. Her mind was so full of Buzz that she could hardly grasp the sense of Mr. Bodkin's elaborate epistle. She read it with a strange expression in her eyes.

"'Poor man!' she thought, a pitying little smile flickering over her proud lips. 'Fancy him competing against Buzz! Alice, my child, come here. I want a serious talk with you.'

"The girl sprang to her feet with an inquiring look.

"'Yes, mamma, what is it?'

"She came to her mother's feet, and drew a low stool forward, resting her arms on Mrs. Lyndsey's knees. There was a glance of suspicion in her eyes as to the nature of this conversation. The widow hesitated, her cheeks as crimson now as the fallen rose she had destroyed. Then she bent down her head and raised Alice's face with one of her heavily-ringed fingers under the girl's chin.

"'I am going to ask you a straight question,' she said abruptly; 'answer me truly.'

"A moment's pause.

"'Alice, would you like to have a step-father?"

"The girl laughed, as if the words brought no surprise to her wide-awake soul.

"'How well she is taking it!' thought Mrs. Lyndsey, hardly able to conceal her delight, as she thought of the young and talented lover she had brought to her feet.

"'Darling!' cried Alice with good-humoured approval, 'it's just the thing of all others I should most desire. I want to see you happy, as I am. It is quite horrid of me not to have confided in you before; but I've often heard you declare that early marriages are a mistake, and of course I know it would be very dreadful to be a grandmother, so I was afraid you would say no. But now that the overwhelming influence of love has come into your life also, I feel it is time to speak. Here is another straight question: Mamma, would you like a son-in-law?'

"Mrs. Lyndsey's astonished eyes expanded. She still looked on Alice as a mere child. This was a revelation.

"Her mother was speechless from sheer surprise.

"'You see,' the girl continued, 'of course he knows I am rather young and inexperienced, and fears that you will blame him for stealing me so soon. It is rather greedy, isn't it?' with a short little laugh, and a quickening of her pulses. 'He has meant to ask your consent every day, but something always happened to prevent him. I really wonder we ever got engaged at all, with so many visitors in the house.

"'Naturally I can guess who you are going to marry, and I am sure Mr. Bodkin will make you an excellent husband. I believe an old man's darling has the best of it in the end. Of course, I don't mean because he dies sooner. Oh, mamma, in your new-found happiness, surely you will never refuse me Buzz? He said he would tell you about it, but I don't believe he has.'

"Alice looked down with a shy smile, her cheeks were burning, and she did not notice the horror and anguish that dimmed her mother's eyes.

"Mrs. Lyndsey pressed one hand to her throat, and dug the pink nails of the other into her small palm.

"The struggle lasted a moment, then she regained her composure.

"'Tell him he may have me,' pleaded Alice.

"Mrs. Lyndsey's voice was strained and faint.

"'I am too fond of Buzz,' she replied slowly, 'to deny him anything.'

"'You *dear!*' gasped Alice with a sigh of relief. 'But, oh, how selfish I am to worry you at such a time with my own affairs! May I see Mr. Bodkin's letter? Or are proposals always strictly private? I would rather like it in black and white. Do let me have one peep; he is to be my father, so it can't matter.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey, now calm and collected, rose and went to her desk.

"'If you will write now, mamma, Buzz and I will walk to the Manor House and leave your letter at the lodge.'

"Mrs. Lyndsey sealed the envelope and handed it to her daughter. She drew a long breath that sounded rather like a sob.

"'Take it,' she said. 'There will be one heart happier for this afternoon's work.'

"Then she went back to the window-seat, and watched them down the drive."

The End.

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What Deaf People Should Avoid.

The things that deaf people should avoid are well summed up in a few brief hints entitled "Don'ts for the Deaf," part of an article on "Hygiene of the Ear," contained in the latest number of the "Review of the Ear, Nose, and Throat Diseases." Turning the leaves of this popular magazine one also finds much of interest in the way of general information on deafness and different forms of catarrh. The routine treatment of the aural specialist comes in for much criticism, and new methods are thoroughly discussed, preference being given to the new treatment based on outward applications behind the ears. This treatment, the Drouet Method, which can be applied at home, is said to have effected a large number of cures in cases where other methods failed. Those who are interested in the subject can obtain a copy of the "Review of Ear, Nose, and Throat Diseases," free by post, by addressing the Editor, Drouet Institute, 10, Marble Arch, London, W. Another Special feature of the "Review" is the enclosure of a Patient's Report Form, for the benefit of those who wish advice, for which no fee is charged if given by correspondence.

The Editor advises patients, however, whenever possible, to visit the Drouet Institute for a personal consultation with the medical staff. Consulting hours are, in the morning, 10 to 12, and in the afternoon, 2 to 4, week days only. A fee of five shillings is charged for personal consultations.

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Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Giving Your Address.

"G. H." has grown very intimate with a gentleman who lives some distance away from her home. He does not know her address. Should "G. H." give it to him, or would that be a forward thing to do?

* * * * *

If you have grown very intimate friends it is only natural that he should know where you live. If you are going to be sweethearts, some day or another he will have to meet your parents or friends, so it would be as well to let him know your address now as then.

Girl versus Relations.

"TROUBLED." You have left your usual place of worship and joined that of your sweetheart, and, as a result, have offended your old friends, and relations. When you took your young lady to see your parents they were very cool, as they did not favour your change of views. Would I advise you to keep her away from your parents for awhile?

* * * * *

If you changed your views sincerely, and not merely to join the same congregation as your sweetheart, then you should have the courage of your convictions. Let your parents and old friends see that you are sincere and in earnest over the matter, and they will respect you ultimately. Meanwhile, perhaps you had better not bring your young lady into too close touch with them. Wait until your parents and friends have appreciated the sincerity of your action, and then re-introduce the girl to them.

A Self-made Man's Worries.

"R." began as a porter in a very large business. Now he is manager, and engaged to a girl very much above him in social position, whose family is very well connected. "R." is nervous as to how to conduct himself in society, as he was only poorly educated, and never mixed very much amongst people. How can he acquire the necessary manners?

* * * * *

If "R." has worked his way up to be manager of his business it is clear that he must have one very great quality—common sense. If that stood him in good stead in business, and brought him to the top of the tree, so will it in society. Let him just be natural, and not assume any airs and graces which are not inborn, and people will take him at his right merit. If he pretended to be what he is not, people would surely see through the mask and his position would be less agreeable.

* * * * *

After all, let people talk as they like, there is always an admiration for people who are successful. At the same time, it would not do "R." any harm to make himself acquainted with the ordinary rules of etiquette, by reading one of the books on that subject. There are little things which one does not gather instinctively, but must learn from experience or study. In "R.'s" case, study would be better.

A Three Years' Friendship.

"I HAVE been going to places of amusement with a young man for three years," writes "MARY." "The more I see of him the better I like him—I am afraid more than as a mere friend. Do you advise me not to see him again?"

* * * * *

No, I don't advise you to give him up. After all, three years is a good long time to have been meeting a young man, and if you have now discovered that you value him above friendship, let us hope that something serious will result. You have tried each other, and found each other suited to companionship. What better case for an engagement if he should be feeling the same as yourself?

A Mysterious Coolness.

"For three years I have been very intimate with a girl," writes "BROKEN-HEARTED." "The other day she suddenly became very cold in her manner. We had no quarrel. She now only recognises me when she meets me. I am sorely troubled, and have sent two friends of hers to ask an explanation. She says it is all my fault, and that she loves me as much as ever."

* * * * *

You should ask her yourself for an explanation, not trust the task to others. Evidently she has heard or suspected something about you of which you do not know. You should find out exactly what it is that troubles her, and give her every explanation in your power. It is of no use allowing matters to remain as at present.

Unreasonable Parents.

"EDITH" is engaged, and her parents have agreed to her marrying within the next year. Yet they consistently refuse to allow her *fiancé* to meet her alone in the house. They insist on all meetings taking place out, and will not allow the young couple to be together in a sitting-room. Do I not think this very hard on them?

* * * * *

If your parents have spare rooms it seems hard that they cannot leave you two alone together. After all, you are engaged, and they have consented to your marriage. They ought, therefore, to trust both you and your *fiancé*. One would think they would prefer your meeting at home rather than elsewhere. But parents are still very eccentric about their children's love affairs. It seems one of those things which they are fated to misunderstand. You have my sympathy.

A Defence of Colonial Men.

"A COLONIAL." Thank you for your letter. I would not for worlds have intended to suggest that there are not, as you say, thousands of men in South Africa as worthy of a British girl's hand as are to be found at home. It may be, too, as you say, that "you would find more gentlemen in the true sense of the word in the colonies than at home, as a result of free life, pure air, and everything that goes to make a man a man."

* * * * *

The opinion I quoted in December, to which you refer, was the verdict of several girl correspondents, and I am glad to hear of the other side of the case, which I would much rather believe to be the correct one. However, when I am asked whether a girl should go to South Africa, with a view to finding a husband, I still reply that if a girl has not met the right man among the many that she should meet at home, I think she would have the same difficulty abroad.

* * * * *

Further, I suppose you will not differ from me in saying that, in the great mining centres, there is a very large number of men who do *not* belong to the class of "true gentlemen" to which you refer. As you must know, such places often contain the outcasts of every civilised nation.

Cynthia

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